

THE MARRIAGE GO-ROUND: AN
EXPLORATORY STUDY OF
MULTIPLE MARRIAGE

By

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CHAPTER I

THE STUDY OF DIVORCE

Introduction

In the past few decades we have seen the United States experiment in many alternative family forms. There has been an increase in cohabitation, communal formation, limitation of family size, dual career marriage, heightened stress on sexuality, and rapidly rising divorce rates to name but a few of the major changes. Each increase in the incidence of these categories has seen a polarization of response. The "me first" generation usually greets each rise with glee and proclaims that individuality is finally flourishing. The opposing camp sadly shakes its head and mutters phrases about the death of the American family.

It is moot to argue whether these changes are good or bad, for the essential fact is they do exist and the best we can do is gain an understanding of each phenomenon by intensive research. This has been the primary response of social scientists with one exception. Little substantive research has been undertaken into the field of remarriage and divorce. The classics in the area (Goode, 1956; Bernard, 1956; Westoff, 1975; Hunt and Hunt, 1974) stand alone as exemplary examples of in-depth studies of a rising phenomenon with few other researchers producing work in the area. Investigation into the area of remarriage and divorce must be pieced together from journal articles published in a wide array of

professional interests from anthropology to social work.

Research into the area of remarriage and divorce has primarily concentrated on the period of adjustment from termination of the first marriage until entrance into the second or in comparisons between first and second marriages with regard to interaction patterns and inherent problems. Almost no research has been done in sequential marriages, often referred to as serial monogamy. This study focuses primarily on those persons engaged in this process of multiple marriages.

Multiple marriage is a growing phenomenon. According to Westoff (1975) six percent of all marriages are composed of those persons who are presently engaged in at least a third marriage. Glick and Norton (1977) suggest that serial marriage is slightly less prevalent. They indicate that for each "100 first marriages, 38 will end in divorce. Of the 38 divorces, three-fourths (29) will remarry. Of the 29 who remarry, 44 percent, or 13, will become redivorced" (p. 26). The initial response of the public to questions of multiple marriage is one of denial or astonishment. "I don't know of anyone like that" or "Why in heaven would anyone get married that many times?" are typical reactions. To the first response I would simply ask for reflective thought. There is a more than good chance that everyone does know of someone who is divorced from a second marriage or is engaged in a third. Multiple marriers do exist.

The question as to why someone would want to remarry numerous times is more difficult to answer. It involves an answer that must take into consideration many factors and varying perspectives. In the literature review this researcher shall attempt to deal with some of the more apparent reasons but for now this researcher will comment on three of the most common explanations.

Historically, multiple marriers have been viewed with suspicion and were frequently labeled as pathological. This tendency to see multiple marriers as neurotic was frequently accompanied by a psychoanalytic evaluation of their personalities. This propensity for labeling multiple marriers as psychologically deficient was so strong that even as insightful a sociologist as Bernard (1956) felt compelled to offer "neuroses" as a weak but possible explanation 24 years ago in her classic Remarriage.

Today most sociologists have dropped a Freudian conceptualization and instead choose to focus on some aspect of social modeling. Mueller and Pope (1977) believe the tendency to divorce is transmitted intergenerationally. In other words, marital instability on the part of the parents filters down to the children and thus children from parental marriages that were voluntarily dissolved will be more likely to dissolve their own marriages than children from intact parental homes. While this explanation fits very nicely with casual explanations regarding high rates of divorce, it says little about reasons employed by multiple marriers.

There have been no figures that this researcher knows of which offers statistical proof that multiple marriers are the children of multiple marriers although this is certainly a process which must be explored in an investigation of sequential marriage. Spanier and Glick (1980) and Monahan (1959) offer the most reasonable explanation supported by other theorists in this area. Basically stated, they appear to believe that once an individual has undergone one divorce it is much easier to engage in a second or a third. Legal, emotional, and social obstacles have been crossed once so multiple divorcers simply know the

routes to take and the consequences of divorce as well as the alternatives to divorce. Implied in this explanation is the incorporation of social and cultural changes in the form of less stigmatization, easier divorce laws, and more job opportunities for females. This is the most conclusive explanation of how multiple marriers go about the process of sequential marriages but does not necessarily offer validation for why.

Why do some people marry frequently? Are multiple marriers somehow different in philosophical orientations, social interactions, tolerance levels than one time marriers? What does "divorce-proneness" imply and how does this category set someone out as being different? What are the social processes involved in multiple marriages? These are but a few of the questions that need to be investigated by research into multiple marriage.

In order to understand multiple marriers some insight into the meaning of marriage and divorce as experienced by persons engaging in these processes must be gained. In the review of literature this researcher will attempt briefly to outline some basic foundations to consider when dealing with the subject matter of divorce and remarriage.

Divorce as a Cultural Experience

Goode (1962), in a cross-cultural analysis of divorce rates, suggests that divorce may be theoretically conceptualized as a failure of boundary-maintaining forces. He points out several institutional patterns societies may utilize as a mechanism for coping with potential or real marital strain in order to prevent a high divorce rate. The first of these patterns involves the lowering of societal expectations for the emotional rewards of the marriage relationship. In other words, persons

are socialized into not expecting a high degree of emotional bonding between spouses, thus insuring that termination of the marriage will not occur as a result of alienation between the dyad stemming from inadequate emotional need fulfillment. This technique of social control of marital conflict is practiced and found to be highly effective in other cultures but is not so in ours.

According to Parsons (1947), the specialized function of the American family has focused on emotional fulfillment and we tend to teach our children to expect the marital relationship to be the one viable institution where need fulfillment can be obtained. As Bernard (1956) explains, we are so socialized into accepting marriage as the primary form of emotional attachment to someone that only those individuals not fully qualified for marriage (i.e., the chronically ill, the disfigured, etc.) primarily account for the small numbers of Americans who don't marry. Although this is a changing phenomenon due to liberalization of the female role in society, it is still overwhelmingly true for the large majority of Americans.

Most Americans marry at some time during their lives. Ninety-four percent of all men and 96 percent of all women marry by the time they have reached their early fifties (Glick, 1978). We enter our first marriage with high expectations for marital bliss and when that marriage fails, we seek out another. Most divorced persons remarry within a three year time span from time of divorce and those individuals who do not remarry are generally female and remain single not from choice but from a vastly reduced pool of eligibles (Spanier and Glick, 1980). Thus while people may object to one particular marriage, the argument is not with marriage as an institution. We enter our second marriages with

perhaps only slightly tarnished expectations. A conclusion which may be drawn from the rapid rate with which we remarry is that marital disharmony is not controlled at a societal level by a reduction in marital expectations.

Goode (1962), in his analysis of divorce, goes on to state that marital instability can be controlled by placing the greatest social values on the kinship network thus reducing the importance of the husband-wife relationship. While this procedure may again be effective in other cultures it fails dramatically in ours. We highly value the integrity of the dyad, often to the exclusion of other kinship ties. This factor manifests itself in several ways. The newly married couple is expected to stand on their own and even if financial aid is received from the parents, an economic investment in the newly formed dyad does not buy parents a right to participate in decision making for the children. Any well-intentioned advice is often seen as an invasion of privacy by the young married couple.

Further evidence of the importance of the husband-wife relationship can be seen in the manner in which we achieve social standing on the part of the female. A female's social standing, regardless of her family background, is still obtained by and assumed determined by her husband's position in the social strata (Nilson, 1979) despite the fact that she may be engaging in a career of her own.

Emphasis on the importance of the husband-wife relationship is also seen in other aspects of American society. While prejudice for the divorced and single female head of household has shown signs of decreasing in the past decade as evidenced by movements toward equalization of credit and job opportunities, such terms as "fatherless children" and

"broken home" designate the degree of stigmatization still present.

Stigma is ascribed to divorced and separated women for their presumed inability to keep their men (Brandwein, 1974). Again, the importance of the husband-wife relationship is reinforced.

Furthermore, females who divorce seldom return home to the household of their parents and while occasional financial aid is extended, most females are expected to make it on their own. There is no re-opening of the parental nest for immediate incorporation of the divorced daughter and her children. The American family in today's society is nuclear (U. S. Census Bureau, 1976).

American society is organized to stress the importance of the husband-wife relationship and to allow for a loosening of ties with kin network, whether it be parents or siblings. We don't control marital instability in this society by emphasis on kinship.

A third element utilized by Goode (1962) in his analysis of the curtailment of marital instability is the implementation of homogamy as a prerequisite for marriage. Most societies reduce potential stress by insuring that the husband-wife dyad have similar backgrounds. While a process of mate selection based on complementary needs may be effective to a large extent, it is not a pervasive phenomenon and cannot be considered a totally effective means of social control in mate selection (Winch, 1958). In a society which values upward mobility it is often necessary for the young to leave their home of origin in order to seek advancement in other geographical areas. This separation from the parental home negates mate selection as a function of kinship guidance and thus reduces the influence of homogamy which would be emphasized by the parents. In this society we stress love as the basis for marriage

and although we generally agree that married spouses should be closely aligned in terms of interests and social backgrounds, we still consider romantic the stories of the princess and the plumber.

By this brief summary of Goode's (1962) analysis of cultural mechanisms for controlling marital instability we can understand that the United States does not practice strict control measures which might insure a low rate of marital dissolution while at the same time neither do we institutionalize practices which encourage marital dissolution.

Divorce is one of the major solutions for an intense degree of marital disharmony and is to be found in most societies and nations. Yet I know of no contemporary society, primitive or industrialized, in which divorce is actually valued. Divorce has its consequences for the society, the kin networks, and the individual; and these are tedious when not awkward, and burdensome when not destructive (p. 513).

While we may not necessarily value divorce as an entity, we do accept its existence as a necessary evil and cure-all for problems between two individuals in a particular marriage. One's own divorce and perhaps one's sister's divorce can often be successfully rationalized as the only possible answer to a high level of marital unhappiness without undue concern, but when we begin to examine national statistics on divorce as a whole we begin to understand the overwhelming impact of "everyone's" divorce.

The past two decades have seen an increase in the rate of divorce. In 1976 there were 90 divorced persons per 1000 population (Figure 1). This shows an increase of 90% from the 1970 ratio when divorced persons accounted for 47 persons per thousand. This figure represents an increase of 157% from 1960 to the present (U.S. Census Bureau, 1976). Stated in other terms, it is estimated that one-third of all marriages will end in divorce and four-fifths of these divorced persons will

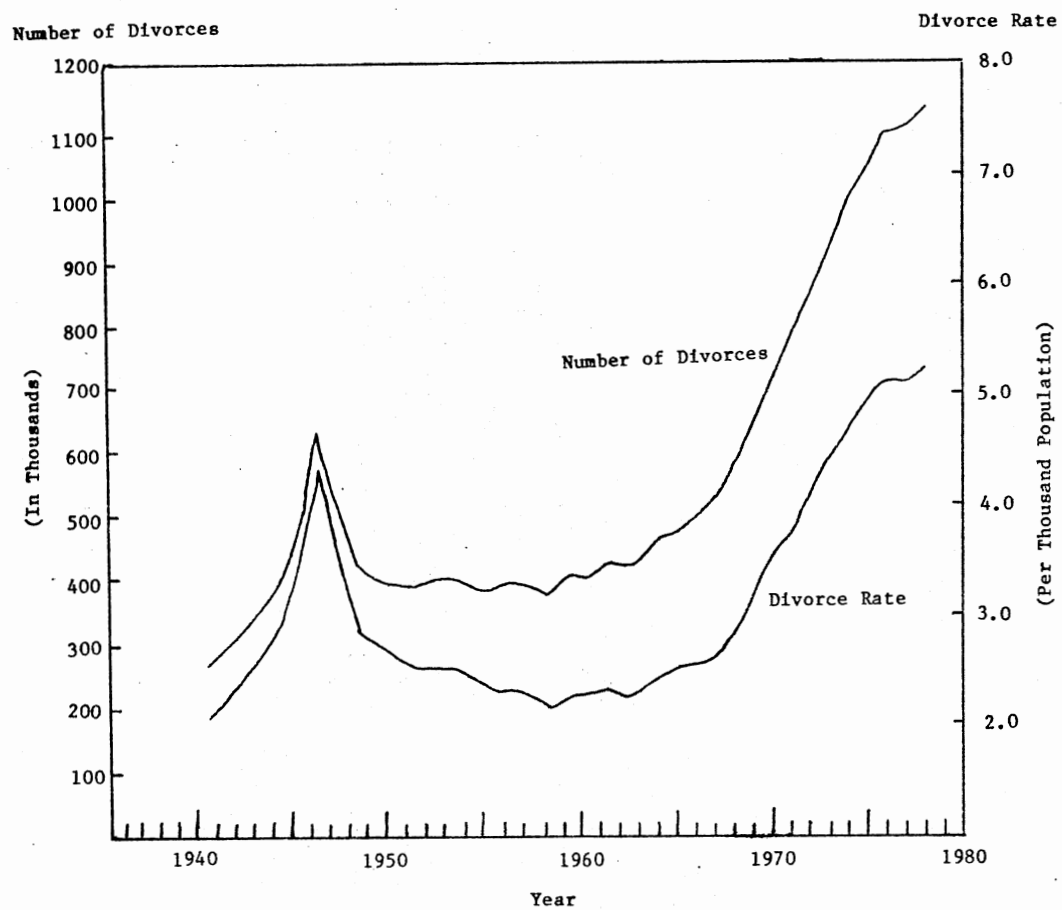


Figure 1. Rate of Divorce 1940-1980

remarry. Even higher rates of divorce are predicted for those in the cohort age group of twenty to thirty. "As persons now in their twenties and thirties survive past middle age, they will probably display an ever higher level of total remarriage experience than persons now in the older age cohorts" (Spanier and Glick, 1980, p. 283). The implication of such mass divorce can be estimated in financial costs in the millions but the emotional costs in terms of stress due to termination of marriage and disrupted households cannot be estimated.

Increased divorce rates can be predicted from observation of the state of the society. Statistics indicate that the divorce rates tend to decrease during economic recessions and increase sharply during wars, after which there is a return to the level of prewar trend (Schwartz, 1968). Laner (1978), in an intensive study of divorce rates, correlated the tendency to have high rates of divorce with multifaceted societal changes.

High divorce rate societies were found to be characterized by the following cultural changes: a transition from predominantly sacred to predominantly secular values (Kirkpatrick, 1955); a transition from population homogeneity to heterogeneity (Burgess & Locke, 1953); resulting in high rates of intermarriage (Cavan, 1963); a movement toward equalization of access to divorce-granting agencies, with a concomitant ease of obtaining divorce (Goode, 1962, 1964); a transition to the use of predominantly subjective criteria as the basis for mate selection (Sirjamaki, 1960); a rise in the importance of the emotional relationship between husband and wife (Dennis, 1962); and a high expectancy of affective intensity in the husband-wife relationship (Parsons & Fox, 1960). Another change is the generally more permissive attitude toward individual behavior (Chester, 1971). Finally, there has been a trend toward bilateral descent, neolocal residence, and the 'independent' nuclear family (Johnson, 1971) (p. 213).

All of the above mentioned cultural factors can be seen as being in direct opposition with Goode's analysis of factors which tend to stabilize marriages. Thus from a rather high level of theoretical generalization

we can come to understand the phenomenon of divorce in the United States as it is influenced by cultural contributions. In short, we have attempted to set the stage for a discussion of divorce by reflecting on societal factors which help influence divorce rates while coexisting with societal values which do not necessarily hold divorce dear.

Divorce and Remarriage from a Demographic Perspective

In order to come to a better understanding of the phenomenon of divorce and remarriage we need to describe demographically those who engage in these activities. In contrast to popular views that those individuals engaging in divorce are persons in their middle years who have grown disenchanted with their spouse over many years, we find instead a relatively young cohort actively divorcing and remarrying. A rise in the divorce rate during the last decade has occurred among couples of all ages, but by far the greatest age-specific rate of increase has taken place among couples in the range of 25 to 39 years of age, the range within which three-fifths of all divorces occur (Current Population Trends, U.S. Census Bureau, 1976).

The median interval between first marriage and divorce is around seven years, whereas the modal length of time between marriage and divorce is two to three years (Spanier and Glick, 1980). Remarriage occurs at a rapid rate with the median length of time between divorce and remarriage being about three years with one-third of remarriages occurring within two years after divorce. There is a direct relationship between length of marriage and tendency to remarry. The shorter the length of the first marriage the quicker the likelihood to remarry.

This tendency lends itself to interpretation of the fact that the younger the age at divorce, the greater the likelihood to remarry at all as is evidenced in the fact that 60% of divorced women were under 30 at time of the divorce and they were three times as likely to remarry within five years as women who were 40 years or over at time of divorce (Glick, 1978). These facts are correlated with the tendency of males to remarry more rapidly than females. In other words, men simply do not stay on the market very long after a divorce and given the double standard of aging, men have a much wider selection group than females.

Women who remained in a first marriage for longer intervals of time are likely to be older and have more children when initially divorced and these factors are hindrances on the road to remarriage. Their pool of eligibles is considerably diminished. Also associated with lessened likelihood for remarriage is high levels of education for women and being black.

From the above discussion of demographic data pertaining to divorce and remarriage, we should be able to ascertain characteristics of the multi-marriers. It appears that multi-marriers should show a tendency to be male, to have engaged in their first marriage at a very early age, and to have produced few if any children from the first marriages. Female multi-marriers also should show a tendency to have first married at an early age, have few if any children from the first or second marriage, possess only average educational backgrounds, be white and still relatively young at the time of entrance into the third marriage. A purely intuitive hunch would predict older categories of female multi-marriers to be especially attractive.

Reasons for Remarriage

Why do people remarry? After undergoing a grueling first experience with marriage, it is interesting to note why people attempt another possible disastrous experience. Smart (1977) suggests that a need for intimacy is of primary motivation for remarriage. Most persons engaged in second marriages cite companionship and sexual access (Hunt and Hunt, 1977; Westoff, 1975) as being particularly influential in the decision to remarry. These could be classified as positive forces which push people into remarriage.

Negative forces also play a role in decisions to remarry and these forces are as fundamental although not as pleasant as desires to seek intimacy. Brandwein (1974) suggests that stigmatization of divorced females recreate a coercive influence in women's lives.

The societal myth of the gay divorcee out to seduce other women's husbands leads to social ostracism of the divorced woman and her family. There are expectations of neighbors, schools, and courts that children from broken homes will not be properly disciplined, will have sex role confusion, and will be more likely to get into trouble. The mothers themselves may incorporate society's attitudes, feeling insecure and guilt-ridden regarding their childrearing abilities (p. 499).

Bernard (1956), Goode (1956), Bohannon (1971) support the assumption that the divorced mother may experience great amounts of guilt with regard to her children and Glasser and Navarre (1965) hold the perspective that divorced women believe society sees them as abnormal and deviant and they themselves accept the label. Spanier and Casto (1979) in their analysis of separation and divorce show that lack of support from friends or family increases the overall difficulties in adjusting to separation and divorce. This lack of support may push individuals into rapid remarriage. Brandwein (1974) also asserts that there are few

social support systems operating in society for the divorced, particularly for the divorced female with children.

While it is true that companionship, intimacy, and sexual accessibility can be found outside the marital relationship, such arrangements, if made public, are often open to criticism (Bernard, 1956) and this public information may certainly lead to further stigmatization of the divorced person. Hunt and Hunt (1977) cite financial security as a possible motivating factor in remarriage and for many females living on minimal income this can be a highly influential factor. As Brandwein (1974) explains, poverty and divorce are highly related.

What we find, then, are many reasons pushing people into remarriage. Remarriage for many may be considered an escape from societal pressures rather than a carefree journey into matrimonial bliss. Many facets of stigmatization associated with divorce in the past have been lifted in the last decade to a certain extent but coercive pressure is still evidenced. Divorce has not been institutionalized in society today but should rather be seen as an incomplete institution.

Remarriage as a Merry-Go-Round

It is a common adage in American society that divorced persons remarry someone exactly like their first mate and that subsequent marriages are repetitions of first marriages. This folk wisdom has not been proven to be true. Peters (1976) in a comparison of mate selection and marriages in a sample of the remarried divorced found that females sought different characteristics in their second husbands and indeed the marriages were rated by the participants as being different. According to this study and others (Albrecht, 1979; Westoff, 1975; Hunt and Hunt,

1977) there are perceptible differences between first and second marriages. Freer sexual expression, more open communication, and more depth to companionship are often cited by remarried individuals. Peters (1976) also found some changes with regard to the amount of parental opposition to the marriage and a lessening of religiosity from first to subsequent marriages although Albrecht (1979) in a more biased sample found no lessening of religiosity. In most cases couples rated the first year of remarriage as happier than the first year of the initial marriage.

Remarriages have a higher divorce rate than first marriages and this statistic has often been interpreted as being indicative of instability in remarriage. Implied in this assumption is that second marriages are also unhappier. Glenn (1977) prefers to interpret this statistic differently. From his perspective, rates of marriage instability cannot be equated with rates of happiness of those marriages which do not end in divorce. He feels that once an individual has undergone a divorce perhaps he is more likely to engage in another if marital expectations are not being met and thus those remarriages which do not end in divorce have a higher quality of marriage than first marriages. Spannier and Glick (1980) concur.

Problems In Remarriage

Remarriages do face special problems not encountered in first marriages. Cherlin (1978) states that the institution of the family provides no standard solutions to many of the problems of remarriage, with the result that the unity of reconstituted families often becomes precarious. Cherlin (1978) as well as Westoff (1975) and Bernard (1956)

stress the importance of language creating special problems in a marriage. Their basic thesis is that we have not invented a special vocabulary to define the relations among remarried with regard to children, ex-in-laws, and the special familial arrangements of blended families. The point is made that if we do not know what to call what Westoff has referred to as a "cast of thousands" in terms which are not stigmatizing, then how can we expect the blended family to feel assimilated as a familial unit or be readily accepted by main stream society?

These writers form a consensus when discussing problems relating to remarriage. Money, children and the special problems associated with "exs" of all categories present the most pressing problems associated with remarriage. In short, remarriage is difficult. Generally there are children involved in the new family unit and while it is difficult enough for two individuals to establish a relationship alone it is more than doubly difficult to do so with additional persons to include in the interaction. These additional persons in the form of children may be less than willing participants.

Financial problems stemming from the need to support newly constituted families while still contributing to families left behind can create almost overwhelming economic burdens. Family research has consistently shown strong correlations between the amount of money available to a family and the perceived happiness of that family unit.

All contributing problems special to remarriage could certainly provide ample justification for termination of a remarriage, however, these factors alone are not sufficient to explain all multiple marriages. Too many individuals remain in remarriages to place the unique problems of remarriage with sole responsibility for the multi-marrieds. Additional explanation must be sought.

Assertions on Causation of
Multiple Marriages

Schram (1979) in a study of marital satisfaction, suggests that some unhappy couples may go through a process of dissonance reduction by progressively defining their marriages as happy or acceptable. Given this viewpoint, then it is possible to reverse the reasoning and apply it to multi-marriers. Are multi-marriers individuals who, for whatever reason, have not the ability to engage in dissonance reduction? If dissonance reduction is impossible then perhaps frequent divorce would appear to be the answer for unhappy marriages, however this particular perspective still does not answer why a multi-marrier appears to have difficulty in securing a happy marital relationship.

Berman, Miller, Vines and Lief (1977) assume a developmental approach to the question of divorce and suggest that perhaps individuals are more prone to divorce during specific developmental crises in their lives. They correlate the age 30 crisis with the seven year itch although they do suggest that the boredom in a marital relationship (the honeymoon is over) is more likely to set in after one or two years of marriage. Perhaps multi-marrieds are persons with a low threshold for boredom and seek continual excitement. If we accept this explanation for sequential marriages, then we have returned to seeing serial monogamy as being practiced by inadequate personality types who lack personal commitment and are overly-prone to developmental crises.

A number of researchers have suggested that divorce is accompanied by varying degrees of trauma. Low trauma is associated with a relatively short marriage span (Goode, 1956; Smart, 1977). Perhaps multi-marriers are individuals who experience only low trauma because they

remain in marriages for only limited periods of time and are never around long enough to become involved in a relationship to have the termination of that relationship be traumatic. Thus, perceptions of the trials and tribulations of divorcing are not painful and do not operate as a control mechanism.

Research Studies of Multiple Marriage

Despite the rise in theoretical consideration of divorce-proneness and the process of multiple divorce, there has been limited research undertaken to support theorizing. Multiple divorce, or multiple marriage, is an interesting social phenomenon to ponder but an extremely difficult one to research. Most of what is known about the multiple married population in the United States is based almost exclusively on a few demographic census and case studies. The focus of attention in multiple marriage has traditionally centered on the act of divorce, as opposed to the act of participating in marriage, and all too frequently those individuals who divorce for the second or third time are categorized as simply "divorced" with no differentiation between those who divorce only once and those who elect divorce more than once.

Monohan (1952) undertook the first attempt to study the multiple divorced population by analyzing census records from 1945 to 1950. His research indicated that the population with three marriages or more accounted for between two and three percent of the marriages in Iowa. He also suggested that divorce following remarriage increased by 10 percent in the five years between 1945 and 1950. Glick and Norton's 1973 demographic study supported Monohan's findings by concluding that over two percent of the male and female population has married for at least three

times. However, in 1974 Riley and Spreitzer determined that approximately six percent of both sexes were multiple divorcees.

Bohannon (1971), by case study method, introduced the notion of "divorce chains" and suggested the need for further investigation into the cycle of multiple marriage. Springer, Mangen, and Springer (1975) in their case study of 12 multiple divorcers also alluded to a cycle effect in multiple marriage and suggested various techniques counselors might employ when confronted with clients who possessed a history of multiple divorce.

In brief, these limited studies form the foundation of the investigation into the process of multiple marriage. We know statistically that multiple marriage and divorce exists but unfortunately we know little more than that.

Conclusion

Throughout the course of the literature review this researcher has attempted to present divorce as a dual faceted entity. Divorce can certainly be an answer for an unhappy marital relationship although those seeking release by divorce may be unhappy with the nature of their solution. From a societal perspective this researcher has presented divorce as a solution which is not valued particularly in this society nor is it particularly constrained by various social control mechanisms. Once through a divorce, many individuals will find life quite uncomfortable due to stigmatization, lack of social support, etc., so that they are motivated into seeking another marriage. However, once in that new marriage they may encounter problems due to a lack of total institutionalization of blended families and again be offered with alternatives.

The legalities of divorce are much easier to overcome in society today and females are becoming more able to break through prejudice and find occupations which allow for the financial support of families. In short, we value divorce and we do not value divorce. It is seen as an answer to the problem and as the problem itself.

Multi-married individuals can be conceptualized as persons who experience developmental crisis, are less willing to settle or reduce idealism or dissonance, have personality disorders which make them incapable of long-term relationships or as simply people who need constant freedom from boredom. On the other hand, we can also visualize multi-marrieds as persons who learn quickly and learn well. We can see them as being strongly influenced by the amount of divorce they see going on in their environment and through various social processes come to see their own divorce as a viable alternative. Having gone through one divorce and learned the 'ropes' they are much more willing to view another and another divorce as the answer for marital hostility. Multi-marrieds, like divorce, can be conceptualized dichotomously as hero or villain. They are inadequate people in some way who cannot seem to stay married or they are high-minded idealists who simply will not settle for anything but the best.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Marriage, the basic conjugal family form found within the framework of Western society has historically implied a relationship which was characterized by the notion of permanence (Goode, 1962). Within the United States, this idea was seen in the expectation that one lifetime mate would be selected for marriage. While divorce did exist in colonial times, it was a rather minor alteration from the typical family form and was not well tolerated within the community (Gordon, 1978; Seward, 1978). The cultural ideal of one spouse and one marriage was historically given credence by the infrequency of divorce.

Throughout the course of the past 200 years, the United States has experienced a steady rise in rates of divorce, lending validity to the notion that a lifetime commitment to one mate is no longer as culturally ingrained as it once was. In essence what is implied by the climb in divorce rates is an alteration of the meaning of marriage, at least to the extent that it impacts on mate selection. Thus, as meanings and definitions of social acts which relate directly to the family via marriage become altered by the process of time, the results of these alterations are evidenced in statistical representations of marriage and family life.

However, a true understanding of the alterations within family life requires more than statistical representation. As Rubin (1976) points out:

We have hundreds of representative studies of one aspect or another of family life- important and useful studies. We have attitude studies and behavior studies; but few that make the link between the two. We have probability statistics on marriage, divorce, sexual behavior, and much, much more; but they tell us nothing of the experience of the flesh-and-blood women and men who make up the numbers. This is not a failure of those studies; they are not designed to do so. Still, they leave us with only a fragment knowledge. Therefore, we need also social science that is so designed-qualitative studies that can capture the fullness of experience, the richness of living. We need work that takes us inside the family dynamics, into the socio-emotional world in which people are born, live, and die- real people with flesh, blood, bones, and skeletons (p. 13).

To understand fully marriage and family life within an experiential context, research efforts must be geared towards the ground floor, to an understanding of the ways in which individuals participating in the idea of family utilize their notions of family life for making sense out of their world. This research effort is an attempt to come to some understanding of a social phenomenon which has been measured by social demographers, lamented by social philosophers, criticized by theologians, but left relatively unresearched by social scientists.

This investigation into the process of multiple marriage uses a qualitative approach in an attempt to give insight and create additional knowledge of one aspect of family life which has successfully been charted statistically but which yields only fragmentary understanding of the socio-emotional world in which multi-marriers are born, live and die. This research effort is an attempt to elaborate on a statistical fact and create for the reader an understanding of the real people who compose the social category of multiple marrier.

A Methodological Approach to Researching Multiple Marriages

Statistics have indicated that for a small, but rising, number of persons in this society, the establishment of a successful marriage is problematic. The past two decades have seen not only an increase in the tendency on the part of people to divorce, but also an inclination on the part of some to divorce and remarry more than once. This marital history has been referred to at various times as serial marriage, serial polygyny, or multiple marriage. In essence, what is occurring is the formation of a new pattern of activity which revolves around the concept of marriage and gives rise to the notion that, for those individuals who choose to participate in multiple marriage, the more traditional definitions, expectations, and meanings usually associated with marriage have somehow been altered.

At the present time we have sufficient demographic information to illustrate the existence of a small group of individuals who engage in the practice of multiple marriage. However, what is lacking in research concerning multiple marriage is an understanding of why this occurs and insight into exactly how the individual goes about engaging in this process. To have a true understanding of the why and how of multiple marriage, it is necessary to enter into the social world of the multiple marrier and seek answers to our questions from those who know it best, the multiple marriers.

Lofland (1971) has pointed out that to have any real understanding of the behavior patterns expressed by any specific group, it is necessary to conduct an analysis from the standpoint of that group.

A first step is to recognize that any participants under study are themselves analytic. They order and pattern their views and their activities. While their world may seem random and chaotic to an outsider, it is a safe bet it is not that way to insiders Since it becomes possible for (the researcher) to provide a more articulate and clearer portrayal of that order than the participants are likely to work up. The analyst seeks to provide an explicit rendering of the of the structure, order, and patterns found among a set of participants (p. 7).

This research into the process of multiple marriage is an attempt to ascertain the how and why of multiple marriage as a process, to gain intuitive understanding of the social nature of the world as seen from the viewpoint of those who know it best. It is an attempt to provide a rendering of the structure, order and patterns found among multi-marriers. Lofland (1971) has also noted that:

to live in the modern world is to know about very many more categories of human beings than one knows directly. That simple fact sets up a fundamental dynamic in the experience of modern people. To begin to know of a category of person is to begin to build a fuller portrait of them. To have a label that specifies the existence of a set of persons is to begin to conceive of what 'those people' are like (p. 1.)

While it is true that readers of this work cannot have the face-to-face experience of actually coming to know multi-marriers in a personal sense, it is hoped that this research will help to break down the barriers which leave the multi-marriers, for the most part, "known about" rather than "known".

In order to bridge the gap between the "known about" and the "known", to create understanding of the process of multiple marriage as it is engaged in by those individuals who are categorized as multimarriers, it is essential to utilize a methodology which is designed to capture the process as on-going human activity. Multiple marriage exists as a form of reality for those participants, and as Blumer (1969, p. 22) explains,

"The world of reality exists only in human experience and only in the form in which humans 'see' that world". A methodology to investigate multiple marriage then, must necessarily present a "world of reality" from the perspective of the multi-marrier.

Many social scientists view human behavior as a product of how people interpret their world.

The task of the methodologist is to capture this process of interpretation. To do this requires what Weber called *verstehen*, empathic understanding or an ability to reproduce in one's own mind the feelings, motives, and thoughts behind the actions of others (Bogden and Taylor, 1975, p. 14).

Thus, in order to understand multiple marriage as a process, the most direct route, and the only true route, is one which involves an interaction with those who engage in the process and by doing so, allows those individuals to articulate their "world of reality" as they see it and live it.

The research problem guiding this investigation into the process of multiple marriage is then a methodological question of how best to grasp understanding of human activity. The approach utilized to gain insight is based on the assumption that in order to understand the interpretations of a specific category of people, one is directed to those individuals who compose that category and true understanding comes only from the study of the spoken words and observable acts of the participants. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, this study then, is an exploratory study of the world of the multi-marrier.

The Methodology Employed

Bogdan and Taylor (1975, p. 4) have defined qualitative methodologies as "referring to research procedures which produce descriptive

data: people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior", in essence, "material in which people reveal in their own words their view of their entire life or part of it, or some other aspect about themselves".

The descriptive data gathered for this research project consists of three types of personal documentation. The first of these, in-depth interviews, forms the foundation of the material under analysis, while two additional sources, personal letters and one diary, compliment and add clarity to the information obtained by interview. This research effort is presented in three parts; selection of the respondents, collection of descriptive data, and analysis of this data.

Selecting the Sample

A multi-marrier, for purposes of qualifying for participation in this research project, was defined as any individual who possessed a marital history of at least two legal marriages and subsequent divorces. Inasmuch as the process of mate selection appeared to potentially be an important element in the process of multiple marriage, those individuals who were presently divorced from second spouses and identified themselves as dating, and therefore had established for themselves a conceptual pool of eligibles, fulfilled the minimal requirement for participation in the research.

While divorces are a matter of public record and as such, are published in the newspaper as well as being recorded in county and state records, there is no available source which readily identifies individuals who have engaged in multiple marriages. This type of information is quite private and difficult to obtain. In order to obtain a sample

of respondents for participation in this research, it was necessary to approach initially individuals who might have access to this type of information. Ministers, counselors, educators and social workers were approached and asked for any possible referrals of multi-marriers. On the basis of the referrals obtained from these professionals, approximately half of the respondents were secured.

In securing the remaining portion of respondents utilized in this research, a sampling technique known as the snowball sample was employed. Babbie (1979) refers to this technique as a nonprobability sampling method which involves asking each person interviewed to suggest additional people for interviewing. As Goffman (1963) has noted, often individuals who share a common attribute are aware of others in the same category. In the case of the multi-marrier, this proved to be a valid observation and the remaining respondents were secured on the basis of referrals by multi-marriers already interviewed. A total of twenty multi-marriers were approached for possible inclusion in the research project with only two refusing to participate.

All respondents were told that this research was undertaken in an attempt to come to some understanding about marriage in general and those individuals who marry more than twice specifically. All individuals interviewed were interested in the project and responded to all questions with a great deal of candor. Assurances of anonymity were given to all respondents and most of the respondents asked to see copies of this study at its conclusion.

The Interview and Other Personal Documentation

After making contact with a respondent, either through a professional

or by snowball sample, an appointment was set up at the convenience of the respondent. It was explained to the respondent that the work would consist of an intensive interview at which time the respondent would be asked to present a biographical history of his life, with particular emphasis on the recounting of marriages and divorces.

All interviews, with the exception of one which took place in this researcher's office, occurred in the homes of the respondents. The interviews lasted between three and six hours. Those interviews lasting over three hours were conducted in two sessions. All interviews, with the exception of one, were tape recorded and later transcribed on to paper. Generally, only the respondent and this researcher were present throughout entire course of the interview. On occasion, children of the respondent being interviewed were present in the home and this necessitated various interruptions for bathroom and water breaks. On four occasions I was introduced to the respective spouse or roommate of the interviewee prior to being left alone with the respondent for the interview. Interviews were occasionally conducted while the respondent engaged in household tasks, such as washing or ironing. While this type of interviewing proved to be difficult at times due to constant interruptions, overall, it worked to create an environment in which the respondent felt at home and as a result, unusually thoughtful responses were elicited.

The basic format of the interview itself consisted of a series of open-ended questions designed to elicit information concerning family background, marital history, value and belief systems, mate selection patterns, and conceptualizations of marriage as a personal experience. Interviewees were asked to be as specific as possible in terms of

reconstructing personal responses to each succeeding marriage and divorce in an attempt to ascertain changes in perceptions of self and marriage over time. Respondents were encouraged to elaborate on any particular aspect of the questioning that they felt was relevant to their own biography. Due to the intimate nature of the interview, the interaction which occurred during the interview was often emotionally upsetting for the respondent and frequently the role of the researcher was altered to also include that of being a nonjudgmental listener.

In addition to transcribed interviews, two other types of personal documents were made available to the researcher by respondents during the course of the interviews. Two female respondents turned to personal letters which they had saved over the years for clarification of certain historical points and allowed the researcher to read them also. One female respondent frequently referred to her diary, a journal which she had kept through the course of two of her three marriages, and gave permission for the reproduction of any portions of the diary. Excerpts of this diary are used extensively throughout Chapter III.

Description of the Respondents

Since this research is a presentation of the social world of a particular category of persons, multi-marriers, and utilizes as a basis for understanding this social phenomenon their perceptions of the process of multiple marriage, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the individuals who joined together to create this special social grouping. While it is not unique aspects of each individual's biography which is of interest in defining a commonality of experience, an overall view of social attributes which these individuals share singularly and in common aid in giving substance to an enlarged perspective.

In all, 10 women and eight men participated in this research. The ages of the respondents ranged from 26 to 39 and included a marital history of two to six marriages and divorces. A summary of demographic information, in terms of social class and family background is presented in Table I. As the reader may note, there are certain similarities relating to social class and family background which appear to be relevant in a definitional composition of multi-marriers. These shared attributes are considered to have an effect on the process of multi-marriage and will be discussed in the text of this research report. The assigning of social class standing for the respondents was based on a self-assessment on the part of the participants as well as the objective evaluation of the researcher.

Again, in terms of presenting a summary of information, Table II also indicates a similarity of pattern with regard to the timing of various marriages and divorces. Since time is considered to be an essential element in the understanding of this social phenomenon, it also will be discussed in the text.

The Analysis

At the completion of the interviews, an analysis of the material was undertaken in order to observe any generic responses among the self-reporting of the participants. A commonality of experience, both in terms of actual marital history and the perceptions, meanings, and definitions derived from such a biography, were assumed to indicate shared elements which compose the process of multiple marriage. For clarity of purpose in reporting the data, direct quotations from particular respondents are frequently offered to the reader. These quotes

TABLE I
RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION IN TERMS OF
SOCIAL CLASS AND FAMILY BACKGROUND

Name	Age	Educational Level	Present SES	Present Occupation	Family Background as a Child	Present Living Arrangement
B. P. Bob	37	Some College	Middle	Lt. in fire dept.	Born 2nd of two sons to career military father and housewife mother, Father enlisted soldier. Family status: Lower-middle class.	Respondent lives with third wife. One son, by second marriage, who lives with mother; rates present marriage as stable.
B. C. Billy	30	High School Graduate	Lower Middle	Auto mechanic	Born 3rd son to family of eight children, father fundamentalist minister; mother housewife. Family Status: Lower middle class.	Lives alone in an apartment; has one son who he has not seen in over six years.
B. Y. Bill	37	Some College	Middle	Police officer	Oldest of three sons to military father & housewife mother. Father enlisted career military. Family status: Lower middle class.	Presently lives with fiancée; plans to remarry shortly; has one daughter who lives with 1st wife; rates present relationship as stable.
P. B. Pam	30	2nd year of college	Lower	Student	Born 2nd of 2 daughters & 2 sons. Father truck driver, mother housewife. Parents divorced at early age & remarried when respondent was five. Father alcoholic. Family status: Lower middle class.	Lives with third, student husband; has 3 children by previous marriages, is pregnant by present husband; rates present marriage as good but unstable.
L. B. Linda	32	Medical Doctor Peds	Upper Middle	In private Practice	Oldest of 3 daughters; father oilfield employee, mother housewife; parents divorced when respondent was 18. Family Status: Middle Class.	Lives with only child in suburban home; presently dating one man but has no plans to remarry at this time.
L. K. Lynn	30	2 years College	Lower Middle	Rock Musician	Born eldest of 3 sons to middle management, father & housewife mother, father died when respondent was 19. Family status: Middle Class.	Lives with brother in urban apartment at present is dating no particular person, but eventually desires remarriage.
M. W. Mike	36	2 years College	Upper Middle	Vice-Pres Insurance Co.	Born to upper middle class family, one younger brother & sister, father radio executive, mother housewife. Family status: Middle Class.	Lives alone in suburban home, at present time is not dating anyone. Father of 2 daughters by 1st two wives, desires remarriage.
S. S. Sandi	29	H.S. G.E.D. Some college	Lower Middle	Telephone Lineman	Born middle child of five siblings to frequently divorced alcoholic mother. Respondent raised in extreme poverty. Family Status: Poverty level.	Lives with son in apartment, is presently dating someone & hopes to remarry soon.
C. B. Connie	33	H.S.	Middle	Housewife Secretary	Born eldest of 2 daughters & 2 sons to lower class family, father truck driver, mother housewife. Family status: Lower Middle.	Presently lives in urban home with daughter by 1st marriage & 3rd husband; rates present marriage as good but probably unstable.

TABLE I (Continued)

Name	Age	Educational Level	Present SES	Present Occupation	Family Background as a Child	Present Living Arrangement
F. R. Fran	35	M.S. Degree	Upper Middle	Child Abuse case worker	Only child of older parents, father oil-field roughneck, mother housewife. Father frequently unemployed. Family status: Lower class.	Lives in suburban home with two sons by previous husbands; is presently involved with divorced man and is contemplating remarriage.
L. R. Lynda	27	M.S. Degree	Middle	School Teacher	Oldest of 2 daughters, mother divorced 3 times while respondent in family home. Family status: Lower Class.	Lives in urban home with only child by last husband, is not dating at this time but desires to remarry eventually.
M. S. Michelle	26	3 years College	Lower Middle	Student	Born to large Catholic family of 3 daughters & 2 sons, father died at 14, mother remarried 5 years later. Family status: Lower Middle Class	Presently lives alone in apartment, no children, is dating one man but no plans for marriage at this time.
J.C. Jim	39	High School	Lower Middle	Auto Mechanic	Born only child to janitor father & housewife mother, 4 half siblings from father's previous marriage. Family status: Lower class.	Presently lives alone in trailer house, has no interaction with 3 daughters by previous marriages, hopes to eventually remarry but dates no one at this time.
L. B. Lynn	41	P.H.D.	Upper Middle	College Professor	Oldest son of lower class family, one brother & sister father truck driver, mother housewife. Family status: Lower Middle.	Lives in suburban home with third wife, has 3 daughters by previous marriages who he sees infrequently, rates present marriage as good but not stable.
V. S. Vicki	35	Vocational Nurse LPN	Lower Middle	Staff Nurse hospital	Born the older of 2 daughters to salesman father & housewife mother, parents divorced while respondent was still in family home. Family status: Middle Class.	Lives in rural home with only child by 2nd marriage and third husband; rates present marriage as stable.
J. B. Johanna	27	High School	Lower Middle	Telephone repairperson	Mother divorced prior to birth, 1 older sister, raised in grandparents home, farming family. Mother remarried when J. was seven. Family status: Lower Middle Class.	Lives in trailer house with live-in boyfriend, no children, desires to remarry but not to present roommate.
M. W. Martha	39	M.S. Degree	Lower Middle	Student	Oldest of 2 brothers & 2 sisters, father died at early age, mother institutionalized, raised by lower income aunt. Family status: Lower Middle Class.	Lives alone in apartment; only child, a daughter, lives with father, no contact with child in over 8 yrs; is not dating at present time but desires eventual remarriage.
T. C. Ted	39	College Graduate	Lower Middle	Postal Worker	Born oldest of 2 sons to Canadian railroad worker father & housewife mother. Family status: Lower Class.	Lives alone in urban apartment, has one son by 1st wife whom he has not seen in 8 yrs, dates no one at present time but anticipates remarriage.

TABLE II
RESPONDENTS' LENGTH OF MARRIAGES AND TIMES SINGLE

Name	Age at First Marriage	Length of 1st Marriage	Length of Time Single	Length of 2nd Marriage	Length of Time Single	Length of 3rd Marriage	Length of Time Single	Length of 4th Marriage	Length of Time Single	Length of 5th Marriage	Length of Time Single
F.R.	20	10 mos widowed	1 yr 4 mos	6 yrs	2 yrs	4 mos	3 mos*				
L.R.	18	2 yrs	1 yr 6 mos	3 mos	2 yrs	5 yrs	6 mos* at				
M.S.	21	9 mos	4 mos	9 mos	2 yrs*						
J.C.	17	5 yrs	6 mos	4 yrs	3 yrs	1 yr 2 mos	2 mos	3½ yrs	2 yrs	6 mos	2 mos
L.B.	20	8 yrs	6 mos	8 yrs	6 mos	2 yrs*					
V.S.	17	4½ yrs	4 mos	3 yrs	3 mos	5 yrs					
J.B.	18	3 yrs	9 mos	10 mos	2 yrs*						
M.W.	16	2 yrs	3 yrs	2 yrs	1½ yrs	6 mos	2 mos	1 mo	2 yrs	2 mos	1 yr*
T.C.	19	6 yrs	6 mos	6 mos	6 yrs*						
B.Y.	20	10 yrs	7 mos	2 mos	1 yr	2 yrs	7 mos	2 mos	2 yrs*		
B.C.	17	1½ yrs	3 days	1½ yrs	10 mos	3 yrs	3 yrs	1 mo	9 mos	5 mos	2 mos*
B.P.	18	3 yrs	1 yr	2½ yrs	3 yrs	3 yrs*					
P.B.	16	3 yrs	1 yr	2 yrs	6 yrs	1 yr*					
L.B.	24	3 yrs	1½ yrs	2 yrs	9 mos*						
Lynn	19	6 mos	10 mos	2 mos	8 yrs*						
Mike W.	22	2 yrs	3 yrs	8 yrs	1 mo	2 mos*					
Sandi	16	5 yrs	2 yrs	2 yrs	2 yrs	2 mos*					
Connie	19	5 mos	1 yr	4 yrs	7 yrs	2 mos*					

*at time of interview

are judged to be most representative of all the responses elicited in discussions of specific points.

The remaining chapters of this work present an assessment of the process of multiple marriage, as it has been experienced and is articulated by those who know it best, the multi-marriers. It is a way of seeing, describing, and explaining this process of sequential marriage by presenting the perceptions of those who participate in it. This researcher realizes, that for some researchers, the methodology used for drawing the sample and analyzing the data is open to criticism. However, in anticipation of such criticism, this researcher offers Rubin's (1976) appraisal:

I am aware that both the methods of this study and the style of presentation are vulnerable to criticism from colleagues in the social science. The small sample not randomly chosen makes generalizations suspect. The anecdotal presentation raises the question of representativeness in the use of data. The only answer to these criticisms lies in the quality of work itself- in its ability to persuade by appealing to a level of 'knowing' that exists in all of us but is not very often tapped; in its ability to borrow a phrase from psychology- to generate an 'aha experience' (p. 5).

If this researcher has in some small way been able to also generate an "aha experience" for the reader, then this work has been successful.

CHAPTER III

THE EARLY YEARS

Introduction

During the course of describing the social world of any specific category of persons it is often necessary to allow history, in terms of personal biography, to initiate the telling. As Mills (1959, p. 6) explains, "No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history and of their intersection within a society has completed its intellectual journey". A complete understanding of the careers engaged in by "multiple marriers" and the processes involved in the acting out of such lifestyles must begin where the lives of these individuals merge with on-going society. We begin our journey into the social world of the multiple marrier with an exploration of the childhoods of this category of persons.

As social scientists we are often interested in the socialization processes in childhood because we are aware that frequently people within a given society have shared experiences which aid them in defining their social world. In this sense, multiple marriers share commonalities of childhood experiences which aid in fashioning perceptions of social life.

There is a real danger in presenting information on childhood socialization and experiences. All too often it is assumed that this type of information implies a causative variable which constrains the

individual throughout the course of a lifetime. Reciting early childhood experiences within a family context is utilized in this study to represent the family unit as an agent of socialization and as a primary group. In this sense, we employ the family unit of multiple marriers as a "Meadian construct" with the understanding that each person approaches his world from the standpoint of the culture of his group (Berger and Berger, 1979).

As has been pointed out countless times, the child grows in a family setting by sharing certain assumptions and experiences with other family members. For this reason, in terms of understanding the importance the family plays in the life of the multiple marrier, we need to be aware of the significance of those "initial others" in aiding to fashion the manner in which the young perceives his social world. As Berger and Berger (1964) explain,

Only by internalizing the voices of others can we speak to ourselves. If no one had significantly addressed us from the outside, there would be silence within ourselves as well. It is only through others that we can come to discover ourselves. This, among other reasons, is why it is so important to choose one's parents with some care (p. 15).

While it is true that the family represents for the young child his first experience with a social world and it often happens that family members become generalized others, this specific point should not be construed as totally directive nor completely explanatory. We need to be cognizant of the fact that internalization of norms, values and belief systems occur which are often in direct opposition to those which the family may advocate (Shibutani, 1967).

First of all in modern societies special problems arise from the fact that men sometimes use standards of groups in which they are not recognized members, sometimes of groups that do not exist at all. Second, in our mass society, characterized as it is by cultural pluralism, each person internalizes

several perspectives, and this occasionally gives rise to embarrassing dilemmas which call for systematic study (p. 159).

Through the course of this chapter we will point out ways in which the socializing family appears to greatly influence the early perceptions of the multi-marrier while at the same time alluding to courses of action which clearly demonstrate opposition to that which one would naturally assume to occur given the familial background. This first chapter attempts to show to what extent those "voices from the outside", whether they originate from family members or persons outside the family context, initiate the creation of lifestyle choices. In giving the historical biography of these individuals it is hoped that the reader may glimpse the ways in which early constructions of realities are generated.

There are several major themes to be aware of which emerge during this chapter. There appears to be a less than subtle adherence to sex roles inculcated into the young multi-marrier as he grows. We begin to see a clear dedication to concepts of masculinity and femininity. Early in the life of the multiple marrier we see an orientation on the part of young males to a social world which exists outside the family unit. For females, we see a strong turning inward, to family, and to expectations of the roles women should play in a male-dominated society. These internalized sex role orientations, on the part of both males and females, eventually influence decisions to leave the family home and marry.

During these early years of socialization fledgling concepts of social identities are formed. The intertwining of family relationships, hardships, and the emergence into a society at large which exists outside the family unit join together to create the basis of "self" for the

young multi-marrier. During the childhood years experienced by the multi-marrier we begin to have some understanding of the needs, desires, and expectations of the child as he attempts to fashion for himself an identity which is more or less satisfying as he matures into adulthood.

This first chapter is an attempt to tell a story. It is a story composed of social meanings, of definitions and vocabulary of motives within an historical framework. It is an attempt to build an understanding of the perceptions of a category of persons as they engage in a portion of their life experience.

The Childhood Home: Early Encounters With a Social World

I can remember being five years old and sitting on the porch steps watching other little children being called into supper and wishing I was one of them. It didn't seem fair. They were so happy and I was so unhappy.

For most multi-marriers, growing up does not represent a time of happy family relationships, picnics in the park or bright pink birthday parties. Instead, each recollection of childhood brings with it a wave of insecurity and, for the most part, a memory composed of distaste and threads of ugliness. Nostalgia is not evidenced as these individuals reflect back on disrupted family unity, financial struggles and years of personal and emotional hardship.

The early years were often spent in homes where happiness and security were fleeting episodes caught within a web of confusion and turmoil. Most recall their childhood in terms of bitter lessons learned and, for a surprising number, in terms of the number of scars and bruises received from angry parents. Of all the people talked with, only three could state that theirs had been a happy childhood. For the rest,

tales of childhood homes centered on the interrelationship of poverty, frequent moves, an astonishing number of step-parents, and poor family relations. These stories combined to create what most Americans would consider a very dismal history.

The majority of the homes and family relationships described here are similar to the families written about by others. These are the homes of the working class and lower middle class families explored by Komarovsky (1950) and Rubin (1976). There are some differences between the homes of the multi-marriers and those homes visited by Rubin and perhaps it is these differences which nurture an environment for the multi-marrier. Unlike the respondents in Rubin's work, these individuals, the multiple marriers, are acutely aware of the pain generated from a troublesome family.

The homes which reared multi-marriers were, in the perceptions of the respondents, fragmented homes which lacked a firm foundation of love and security. Lack of money and overcrowdedness were primary concerns. The stability of the family was often disrupted by the departure of family members and there were seldom any persons outside the family with whom close relationships could be formed.

On the whole, for these families, there appeared to be few ties with community groups or organizations. The parents of the multi-marriers did not belong to any formal clubs and seldom even joined loose social gatherings. Education was not highly valued and children were seldom encouraged to seek a different or better lifestyle. The only major tie to any type of organization found outside the family was the church. In approximately half of the families some form of church affiliation was encouraged. The churches chosen by the parents were generally fundamental

organizations which advocated a strict biblical interpretation and code of personal conduct. For the adolescent multi-marrier being influenced by a more liberal attitude from society at large, this one strong tie to a group outside the family often became problematic.

With allegiance to outside organizations being discouraged, multi-marriers as young children were primarily influenced by the family unit. The growth of these children in these homes, and the recollection of childhood relationships produce some insight into the eventual lifestyles chosen by multi-marriers.

Unhappy Homes: The Initial Meaning of Family

The early years were hard ones, a time most multi-marriers later spent in attempting to overcome in a variety of strategies.

I guess you could say I was relatively happy as a child. Most of what I remember of my childhood is a lot of noise, people yelling at each other. I swore when I grew up I wouldn't have so much noise all the time and now I don't.

Lynn, age 30, divorced twice.

This statement is from a young man who is twice divorced, with each divorce being preceded by a demand on his wife's part to begin a family. Other multi-marriers began an attempt to achieve a sense of normalacy very early in their lives.

I was always unhappy as a child and I was always looking for happiness. It was a continual search. I made friends only with those kids who has a normal home so I could be in those houses a lot. I used to pretend they were my home. I was very social as a child and would be so friendly the parents would like me around. When a girlfriend of mine had parents who got divorced, I dropped her as a friend. Her home wasn't normal anymore.

Linda, age 27, divorced 3 times.

Another young woman, divorced three times, describes her present lifestyle in terms of her guilt over a childhood of poverty.

My mother used to tell me that she was so happy when I was born but I never believed her. When I was growing up we were always poor. There was never enough money. Mom had a scrap-book of pictures of she and Dad of the time before I was born. They had new cars and big houses then. I guess all that changed after I was born. I decided when I was little that no one would have to suffer on my account again. If there isn't enough money, I get out [of relationships and marriages].

Fran, age 35.

Alcohol played a large part in the creation of painful memories.

Almost half of the people interviewed credited alcoholic parents with being the motivating factor in unpleasantness.

My father was a drinker and when he had been out drinking he would come home in the middle of the night and get us kids up out of bed and yell at us or hit on us. The next morning he wouldn't even remember it.

Connie, age 33, married 3 times.

Home to me was a place to stay away from. My father was an alcoholic but he finally left when I was eight. Of course, by then Mom was drinking too. Mom married three more times before I finally left home but she never stayed married long. She was kind of hard to get along with.

Sandi, age 27, divorced 3 times.

There wasn't much to being at home. It was alright. Of course, Dad was a trucker then and when he had had a few belts the fur would fly. I never got hit by him because I could tell when he came home drinking and I got scarce until he was sober.

Lynn, age 41, 3rd marriage.

For a few respondents, particularly males, unpleasant memories are tenuously hidden under a veil of nostalgia which is rapidly ripped away in reflection. One man, divorced five times, tells of the happy times associated with his childhood in a family of eight children.

It was nice being raised with that many brothers and sisters. We were kind of a Walton type family.

Billy, age 30, divorced 5 times.

"Because of that nice memory of a large family did you also want to have a large family?"

Good Lord, no! I only have one child from my first marriage and he was an accident. I don't want any children. They are

too much trouble and all that confusion. I guess . . . I guess we weren't much of a Walton family after all.

Interestingly, female multi-marriers readily acknowledge their early years as a period of unhappiness and powerful loneliness while males appear to initially present their boyhoods as relatively carefree, only to allow contradictory glimpses of unhappiness to occasionally slip out. A police officer, Bill, age 37, divorced from his fourth wife, described his early years as "typical of everyone else's". Much later in the interview he began to discuss his views on child rearing.

I think a child needs a certain amount of discipline. I was disciplined as a child regularly by my father.

"How did he discipline you?"

Oh, he used to beat me with a stick he kept behind the kitchen door. I guess today he would have been tried for child abuse but back then no one said anything no matter how many bruises a kid got.

"Do you agree with your father's form of discipline for your own children?"

Hell, no! I have arrested people for doing the same thing.

Another man, presently in his third marriage, describes his childhood as stable and happy only later to elaborate on the early years with a certain amount of remorse. "What kind of relationship do you have with your daughters?"

Not nearly as close as I would like, although I don't really want to see them anymore than I do. When I was growing up I was totally indifferent to my family. My home was just somewhere I happened to sleep and sometimes eat. My family didn't know who I was or what I did. I came and went at will and now it is hard to remember any of my childhood in relationship to my family. What I do remember centers around me and only very peripherally with my family. I hope my daughters don't recall their childhood like I do.

Lynn, 41, presently in 3rd marriage.

While discussing childhood experiences with multi-marriers one is rapidly struck by the dicotomous memories of early childhood. Why are females so much quicker to label a childhood as unhappy while males seem reluctant or refuse to do so? Surely being beaten by a father or living in a home where other family members are only peripherally involved with one's life is as traumatic in its own way as those family homes experienced by females?

The Rise of Masculinity and Femininity

As interviews progressed many differences were noted with regard to male and female perceptions of social life. Those elements in a female's life which reach paramount importance are perceived as grossly diminished in scale by males. Bernard (1972), Rubin (1976) and others have written much on this phenomenon, this differential process of socialization of males and females. Both authors suggest females are socialized early to describe their lives in terms of their relationships with others, in this case, family members. Relationships define for the female her quality of life. Of course, if she perceives her family life as bad, the memories are so much stronger and prevalent in adulthood. Men, whose lives are centered on achievements and not relationships, are not condemned to define themselves or their past histories in terms of others. While alcoholic fathers, beatings, and other family members can be seen as only peripheral to the biography of a man's life, they are the critical core of the woman's. This same phenomenon, slightly altered in form, occurs over and over throughout the life course of multi-marriers. Unhappy childhood homes, experienced by males and females alike, are processed differently and have varying prominence in adulthood.

Females readily describe unhappiness as children, men, more slowly, and with only gradual lifting of the veil which obscures the vision of unpleasantness.

As previously noted, in reflecting on childhood memories, we begin to initially observe a varying in the perceptions of males and females. The emergence of sex role orientations can account for the discrepancies in recollections. As young girls, female multi-marriers have been socialized into concentrating on relational elements in their lives while young males have been directed away from such constraints. The basic differences between the sex role orientations evidenced here is simply described as the difference between 'doing' and 'being'. Young male multi-marriers are early in life taught that in order to receive validation of self it is essential to achieve, to engage in the active doing of some specific task. Female multi-marriers, as young girls, have been shown that validation is given for simply being a particular type of person. Little girls can simply be a nice girl or be a pretty girl and not necessarily have to be actively engaged in doing anything. Little boys, by virtue of being male, quickly learn that climbing the highest tree or scoring a home run is the easiest avenue for achieving the validation given to girls for simply existing as females.

Thus we see a concentration on the part of female multi-marriers to being involved in a relationship with parents and siblings, and later husbands and lovers. Validation of self is achieved by engaging in relationships with others, by 'being' the counterpart of a dyad or a group. For male multi-marriers, being involved in a relationship is not seen as an active orientation. One must go out and 'do' something, not simply 'be' something. Given the orientation of the two sexes to the

differences between being and doing, there is little question as to why female multi-marriers are so much more acutely aware, have so much more vivid memories of the relationships experienced within the family home.

Living Through It: Alienation from the
Concept of Family

For many multi-marriers growing up was a process they conceptualize as something to be 'lived through' in order to get it over with, much as most Americans live through income tax or costly automobile repairs. Much of the unhappiness attributed to childhood stems from an early feeling of alienation from family, often at times appearing self-imposed.

I always felt different from the rest of my family. I never felt like I was really one of them. I never wanted to be one of them.

Linda, age 27, divorced 3 times.

Somehow it just seemed that I turned out to have nothing in common with my sisters. We were not alike.

Johanna, age 27, divorced 2 times.

I never felt like I really belonged. Everyone else liked my step-father but I didn't. When I was older I talked with my mother about how I didn't feel like I was really accepted by the rest of them. She told me that wasn't so. However, when I turned eighteen and first left home, one weekend I went home to visit and they had moved to another town and hadn't told me. I went home and no one lived there anymore. That's how much of a part of the family I was.

Michael, age 26, divorced 2 times.

"Did you not know they were planning on moving?"

Yes, they told me they were moving but not when.

Becoming alienated from the rest of the family appears to be one way of separating oneself from the trauma of pain and confusion.

If only one can learn to care not so much, then the pain of violence and lack of love is diminished.

Sure, I had a hard life. I had to live through a lot. But I did it. I just stayed away from home until way past dark and only went home to sleep.

Connie, 33, 3rd marriage.

When I was growing up I spent as much time away from home as possible. I would spend the nights with my aunt and grandmother. Sometimes I would stay with my girlfriend. If I had to sleep at home only two nights out of the week I would count myself lucky.

Pam, age 30, 3rd marriage.

One time I got an award at school and didn't tell my mother I was getting it. She found out about it later and asked me why I hadn't told her. I didn't want her to come to school to see me get it. I wanted my own life.

Linda, age 27, divorced 3 times.

Separating oneself from the people who are responsible for unhappiness is a lesson multi-marriers appear to learn at an early age. Young boys, given more freedom in youth due to their sex, utilized this procedure more frequently than did their female counterparts. At a later point in this study, we shall see that this means of avoiding unpleasant interactions also applies to marriages.

Family Relationships: Interactions with Early Significant "Others"

For the multi-marrier, home is not where the heart is and is remembered as a place from which most urgently wished for an early departure. Many placed blame for early disenchantments on the inability of parents to maintain a solid home, free from anger and hostility openly expressed to each other.

A Biblical scripture notes that the sins of the father are not visited upon the child but in the case of the multi-marrier, it is often the perceived sins of the parents which generate a unifying thread from one generation to the next. The recalled unhappiness and problems of

childhood related by the respondents suggest, that for many, parental memories provoke memories of episodes of behavior which at times stand both as a model for living and as a negative example. Most commented that the pain of childhood stemmed in some manner from the inability of parents to provide a sheltered and secure environment. Accusations of irresponsibility and lack of love still have the ability to bring tears or grimaces of anger although the individual may well have not lived in the parental home for over twenty years.

People like that shouldn't be allowed to bring children into the world. No kid should have to go through what I did.

Vicki, age 33, 3rd marriage

One time my sister was going to report my father to the police for beating us but they wouldn't accept her word. Mom had to back her up and she wouldn't do it. How can any mother just let that happen to her children? I still don't understand why she just let him do that to us. Today I am scared that I might start to abuse my children also. I haven't and I don't want to but look what happened to me as a kid. He hit us and Mom let him.

Pam, 30, 3rd marriage.

On the other hand, for a few, mixed in with the anger and disappointment of a lost childhood, is a certain amount of understanding flowered by maturity and the experience of living within the same harsh environment which had constrained their parents. As one woman explains her gradual acceptance of her mother;

I used to blame my mother a lot because living at home was so hard and there never was any fun or money. It wasn't until I got my first divorce and had to raise my kid alone that I began to understand how things were when I was little.

Sandi, 29, divorced 3 times

This woman, after years of living, now sees her mother in a different light. She credits her mother with the instillation of certain good qualities in herself, yet still manages to separate herself from her mother.

Sure, when I look back on myself as a child I can now understand how difficult it was for my mother. There she was divorced with five kids. But her hitting the booze didn't help. When I found myself divorced with kids to support I was like my mom in some ways. Only I got tougher. If she had been tougher life would have been better. She taught me to be tough because she wasn't.

For the most part, reflections of the early years concentrated on the disruptions and disharmonies brought about by living in situations dominated by too little money.

We never had much money to begin with and when Dad lost his job and found out that another baby was on the way, he just split. It was more than he could handle.

Linda, 27, divorced 3 times.

We had to live with my grandparents when I was a kid because my parents were divorced when I was young and she [mother] couldn't make a go of it. My grandparents fought all the time and Mom was gone a lot. I used to wonder what it would have been like if it had been just us.

Johanna, 27, divorced 3 times.

There was never any money to go anywhere or do anything-just all of us together in that little house. No wonder people were always fighting-there wasn't anything else to do. No wonder he left [the father]. I left as soon as I could too.

Vicki, 35, 3rd marriage.

Many blamed lack of money for the exodus of the father or the constant friction caused by a too tired mother.

There wasn't money enough for booze and to feed us too. He'd of rather drank so I guess he left so he didn't have to watch us not have enough. That made it harder even for Mom. At least when he was there, even drunk, he helped out a little.

Sandi, 29

The Parental Marriage: Observations of the Marital Relationship

For many multi-marriers, the parental marriage created a strong impression in young minds. Most of the respondents remembered their parents marriage, and for many, subsequent remarriages of parents, as relationships which were void of any strong emotional attachment.

What I remember about my parents marriage is that it wasn't very happy. It seemed more like a joint partnership to make it [economically] than a marriage.

Fran, age 35, divorced 3 times.

Very few recall any affection being expressed between parents and as one man explains:

I never saw them kiss each other or show that they cared about each other. He didn't hit her and I suppose they had sex. They had us children. I don't remember ever thinking about my father loving my mother at all. It just wasn't something that I thought about one way or another.

Ted, 39, divorced 2 times.

What did I think of my parents' marriage? Well, as a child I didn't think of it at all. But now, in retrospect, I suppose it was alright. He (the father) ruled with an iron hand. Mother was sort of in the background doing what he wanted her to . . . I guess they were happy enough. At least my attention was never drawn to the fact that something was overtly wrong.

Lyn, 41, 3rd marriage.

The above two responses are from interviews with men. Women mentally recreate their parents marriage in far different terms. "What was your parents' marriage like?"

I don't call it a marriage - not what I want a marriage to be. He was an alcoholic and used to beat us up. I couldn't go to gym when I was in school because of all the bruises. He would bring his girlfriends home with him. My mother would just leave the room until they left. She divorced him once when I was three or four. Things were hard for us then - no money. She remarried him four years later. When things were hard when he was gone I used to beg her to get him back - but when he came back with all the booze and the beatings, I begged her to leave him again. She wouldn't. I think living those years without him scared her. And living those years with him scared me. So much of my life was spent in fear of him. I'm 33 years old and still scared of him. Their marriage was- he abused and she took it.

Connie, 3rd marriage.

What marriage do you want to talk about? I had three step-fathers and never liked any of them. They were all alcoholics. All she ever married were alcoholics and being married to a drinker is no marriage at all. None of them ever cared if we [the children] were around.

Linda, 27 divorced 3 times.

Intensification of Sex Roles

With regard to perceptions of parental marriages, there is at once a very discernable difference evidenced between males and females. For females, the majority of the parental marriages were fraught with alcohol, physical abuse, extramarital affairs and little love between parents. Each female was able to describe in precise terms the quality of relationship she felt her parents employed. For male multi-marriers, the parental marriage was of little concern. It existed but few memories are associated with it. Most males responded to questions concerning the parental relationship with such phrases as "I guess they were happy enough, I never thought about it" or "I suppose he didn't really treat her very well but she never complained". Even direct probing reveals little thought on the part of males being given to the quality of the parental marriage. "You say your parents had a happy marriage. Could you tell me about it in a little more depth?"

He never hit her or anything but he did yell at her on occasion. In retrospect, the only time I remember him communicating with her was in direct response to something that needed to be done. 'I want my dinner now or pick up my suit at the cleaners'. Other than that, I don't remember them talking about anything. But like I said, she never complained so I guess she was happy.

Mike, 36, divorced 3 times.

Females, on the other hand, go in to great detail to illustrate the marriage between parents.

Let me tell you what that marriage was like. When my mother went into the hospital to have my little brother, my father was out drinking and went to the hospital drunk. He created a stink and signed my mother out of the hospital AMA. He had a friend who worked at a funeral home so he brought my mother home from the hospital in a hearse. Can you imagine? I didn't know if she was dead or what. What kind of weird father is that? That's the kind of marriage they had.

Pam, age 30, 3rd marriage.

Notice that for females the descriptions of their parents' marriage invariably are couched in terms of the child's relationship with her father. Women began to illustrate parental marriages with such phrases as "I hated my father" or "I never got along with my father". Note the earlier quote cited, "I don't call it a marriage--at least not what I want a marriage to be". At that point the woman then began to describe her relationship with her father as a description of the parental marriage.

Male respondents did not speak with this interpersonal detail. To deny understanding of the parental marriage (I never thought about it one way or another) reveals the essence of the male response to the parental marriage. Those marriages existed only peripherally in the boy's life and had little direct influence on the day to day activities of the young male multi-marrier.

Were the parental marriages of the males so much better than those of the female? This researcher does not think so. Simply because the mother never complained about being hit or the extra-marital activities of her husband does not necessarily indicate that the quality of the marriage was really any better. I believe the answer lies again in the strong dicotomy between males and female with regard to interactional perceptions. A social world is again perceived and experienced differentially. Why do females describe a parental marriage in relationship to themselves while males show little intuitive understanding or overt concern with the parental marriage? Rubin (1979, p. 119) explains this phenomenon precisely, "Being born male means living in a different world from anything most women know, anything they will ever know. It means not having to define oneself vicariously through the lives of others."

Women are socialized into defining the parental marriage in terms of their relationship with a man, in this case, the father or the step-father. Men are not dependent on relational definitions of the parental marriage and thus show little concern at this time in any intuitive understanding of the parental marriage. It affects them so little. Males and females, while growing up, observed the same qualities in a parental marriage (physical abuse, alcoholism, frequency in exchange of marriage partners) but define these episodes differently. The "bad" parental marriage is of overwhelming concern to the young girl and is well remembered. For the boy, concerned with achievements and sports, the parental marriage is easily ignored.

A Cycle of New Parents

Individuals interviewed for this study were born primarily during the 1940's and grew up during the 1950's. While American society was beginning to experience the effects of a rapidly rising divorce rate during the adolescence of the respondents, an intact family home was still the norm. Divorce had not yet lost its powerfully stigmatizing influence and families who had experienced a divorce were still being termed "broken homes".

During a time period when the intact family home was being heralded as the only appropriate familial form, most multi-marrieds were subjected to the break-up of that home due to divorce. Many divorces were evidenced among the parents of the multi-marrieds. For example, in nine cases where the mother assumed the role of primary singular caretaker, these nine mothers collectively shared 14 divorces. For four other multi-marriers, death of the father and subsequent remarriage by the

mother created a restructuring of the family unit during childhood. Two other persons involved in the study were raised by various relatives for sporadic time periods due to incapacity of the mother. In short, not only were multi-marrieds subjected to daily witness of "bad" parental marriages, but for many, this was simply a never-ending cycle of marriage and remarriage, with few episodes of stability on the part of the parents.

Relationships with Parents: Early Interactions

Multi-marriers on the whole generally did not form a close relationship with either parent as a child, and for many, have not yet achieved a sense of intimacy with a parent as an adult. In only one instance did a respondent describe a relationship with a parent as close during childhood. If closeness does develop over time, it is generally with the mother after the multi-marrier has been out of the family home for many years. This is especially true for males. Fathers are seen as being a member of the traditional "stern father image"; not someone the son can readily relate to. Men, in describing their fathers, are often apt to use words which connote authoritarianism.

My father was always Sgt. Young. He was a military man. I still think of him today as Sgt. Young.

Bill, 37, divorced 4 times.

My father was a fundamental preacher and I guess what I remember most about him was his telling me about the things I did wrong. I was the black sheep of the family and always in trouble and he was always talking to me about it.

Bill, age 30, divorced 5 times.

My father was real stern. He would beat me when I did something wrong. I was always a kid to him until the day I married and then suddenly I was a man and he never hit me again.

Jim, 39, divorced 6 times.

My father never had time for me as a child. He was always working. I played football both in high school and college and he never once saw me play.

Mike, 36, divorced 3 times.

One might ask "Were no fathers open and loving to their sons?"

With few exceptions, there appears to be no love and the majority of the relationship of sons with fathers is one which is based on fear. The fathers were conceptualized as authority figures, inflexible and rigid. Fathers were seen as the individuals who meted out punishment and ruled the family with an iron fist. Mothers, on the other hand, were "whispy creatures" living within a mist, not very effective persons and totally devoted to maintenance of hearth and home. However, for most male multi-marriers, it was the mother's home where each sought refuge after divorce.

"After you left your wife, what did you do?"

I went back home to mom's.

"What was your mother's reaction to your divorce?"

You know, that was strange although at the time I didn't think about it that way. It was as if I never left. Life continued on as it always had before and never once did my folks ask me about it or even mention it. It was as if it never happened.

Mike, 35, divorced 3 times.

When my folks found out I was getting a divorce, they came to see me. My father asked me if I was sure this was best. I said yes and he turned to my mother and said. 'See, I told you we couldn't do anything' and then they left and never mentioned it or any of my other divorces again.

Lynn, 41, 3rd marriage.

For men, it was as if marriage suddenly elevated them into the ranks of adulthood, a rite of passage, and any subsequent happening in the life of the son was no longer the business of the stern father. The bird had left its nest, and while it could return periodically for rest and recovery, this did not revert the son back into the position of being controlled by the father.

While male multi-marriers generally maintain nominal ties with the mother as adults, the father is quickly discounted as an important person and is seen only inadvertently during visits to the mother. Fear is rapidly forgotten.

For female multi-marriers, the situation is somewhat different. The father who is seen as an awesome figure in girlhood still retains that image in adulthood. Females, perhaps sensing themselves less powerful, exhibit stronger signs of fear of the forbidding father.

I hated my father. I was afraid of him.
Connie, 33.

I didn't like any of my step-fathers. They were all drunks.
Linda, 27.

When I was 10 my older sister and my mother had a talk with me. They told me if my father ever tried anything with me to go tell them. I was afraid to be in a room with him alone.
Pam, 30.

"What was your relationship like with your mother?"

My mom was always trying to explain my father. She was forever trying to reconcile us kids with our father but she never could me.
Pam, 30.

I told you we lived with my grandparents until she remarried. She had never learned how to cook or keep house because my grandmother always did it. When we moved to the new house someone had to do it so I learned at the age of nine. My mother never learned how. First grandma and then me to do it for her.
Johanna, 27, divorced 2 times.

For female multi-marriers, life appeared to be particularly difficult. As indicated from the preceding quotes, the majority of female respondents considered their relationship with their fathers to be quite bad. The father was seen as an all-powerful figure and as someone whom they wished to avoid at all costs. However, unlike their male counterparts who could more easily justify time spent away from the home in

sports and school activities, being female denied them the advantage of unaccounted for time away from the home and insured habitual contact with the father. Fear of the father was especially emphasized due to lack of any buffering agents. Most female multi-marriers denied receiving any support from their mothers during attempts to either avoid interaction or establish any type of working relationships with their fathers. A surprising number of females still, after many years, expressed hostility over what they viewed as the lack of buffering by the mother. Reinforced in the still present hostility is the notion that females are ineffectual, powerless compared to men.

What good was she to me? I told her about Dad and the way he was acting towards me [sexual overtures] and she wouldn't do anything. She was always too afraid of him to take care of me.

Connie, 30, 3rd marriage.

My mother was always too busy with her drunks [step-fathers] to worry about us.

Linda, 27, divorced 3 times.

Several of the female respondents had been reared periodically in the homes of relatives due to chronic psychiatric hospitalizations of their mothers. For these mothers, leniency is evidenced by the child to the extent that an explanation is even supplied as to why her mother is not responsible for memories of an unhappy childhood.

When my father died I was raised by my aunt. My mother was in the hospital. It was so hard for her to accept my father's death that she needed to be treated for a nervous breakdown. The stress and all . . .

Martha, 39, divorced 5 times.

"Was this her only admission to a hospital?"

Oh, no. Mother was a paranoid schizophrenic.

Another woman, again with a mother in the hospital, tells a similar story in defense of her mother.

After Daddy died mother had problems accepting his death and had to be hospitalized for nerves. We weren't close because she had to go to the hospital. It wasn't her fault I wasn't happy. She just couldn't be at home because of her nerves.

Michelle, 27, divorced 2 times.

It appears that mothers who were not primary caretakers are forgiven for the experiences suffered as a child. Not so mothers who remained in the family home. For the mother who was involved in the child's life on a daily basis, anger is still present for the mother who was not capable of protecting her child from a hostile environment.

Differential Perceptions of Interaction

In terms of relationships with parents, male and female multi-marriers, as adults, recall the parent-child interaction differentially. Fearsome fathers remain scary images for females but lose their potency for males. Mothers are never blamed by sons for beatings or unloving fathers but continue to remain peripheral individuals in the adult's life. Females express such anger towards mothers for the generation of a threatened and insecure childhood, that even as grown women themselves, often during this part of the interview tears of bitterness crept out.

Thus, male multi-marriers are taught to respect the strength of the father figure and never give much thought to the role of the mother. Female multi-marriers appeared to develop fairly early a sense of powerlessness over their lives by observing ineffectual mothers and the lesson of superiority on the part of males is replayed over and over. These early conceptualizations of the roles of men and women in day to day living were destined to be re-enacted during later marriages.

Siblings: The Exclusion of Others in
the Meaning of Family

Few of these individuals were reared in isolation. Most had brothers and sisters sharing the experience of childhood. What of these people? Could they be persons to whom the young multi-marrier could turn for some comfort and security? For the most part, the answer is no. Just as the parental marriage appeared for many multi-marriers to be a "fractured institution" not to be trusted in terms of insuring stability in a relationship, siblings also seemed to be persons the child couldn't trust. Sharing the same growing environment did not justify closeness to the young multi-marrier.

Most individuals interviewed described their relationships with their siblings as not close at all. Many of these persons have little contact with grown siblings now and in giving descriptions of their childhood, seldom volunteered information regarding the existence of any brothers or sisters initially.

"Tell me about your childhood."

Oh, we lived on the farm. My father was a farmer and mother kept house. I liked farm living . . .
Michelle, 27, divorced twice.

Approximately 10 minutes later the subject happened to mention a sister.

"You have a sister?"

Oh, yes. I have an older sister and three brothers.

Siblings are mentioned only as second thoughts or inadvertently during the discussion of childhood. If a sense of closeness does exist between siblings, it is generally a relationship which has developed since adulthood. For the most part though, little is known about the sibling.

I have two younger brothers.

"How old are they?"

I guess I can give approximate ages. I don't keep track of things like that.

Bill, 37, divorced 4 times.

I manage to see one of my sisters pretty regularly, like at Xmas and things like that. We don't live close to each other so it's hard.

Sandi, 29, divorced 3 times.

"Where does your sister live?"

Across town.

"What is your relationship like with your brothers and sisters?"

My sister is just about it. I figure that's good enough. One out of five ain't bad.

Sandi

"You say you have a close relationship with one sister. What about your brothers?"

Nothing, nothing. They are drinkers, hot tempered and physically violent just like my father. I stay away from them.

Sandi

From the descriptions which are offered of early childhood, siblings are seen only as a happenstance. Multi-marriers appear to view siblings much as one would a survivor in a life boat, haphazardly being thrown together by fate to share the experience of being castaways at sea; that is, every man for himself.

While it is true in most American families that the parents often remain the primary rallying point for siblings, at least some ties, however nominal, are maintained. This is not evident for multi-marriers. For these individuals the notion of family is not conceptualized as an enduring relationship which remains intact much beyond the period of mandatory confinement together. Family, either in the sense of primary

caretaker or membership in the rearing process, is not portrayed as a stable entity. Family members come and family members go. Perhaps the most important lesson multi-marriers learn through this process of interchangeable family members is that in order to survive within a family context, to be able to live through it, one had better not place too much faith in the longevity of relationships.

No Place to Call Home

What becomes apparent in talking with multi-marriers is the idea that these are people who grew up essentially alone while living in the midst of others. As children they were witness to frequent family fights, often times the observers or the victims of abuse, and on the whole, suffering from an economic poverty which is difficult to explain to a child.

Most of these individuals have few ties with any one place or any particular set of people. Frequent moves characterized the geographical arrangements of the family unit. Primarily this was due to the necessity on the part of the father or step-father to secure work. Equally as often mobility was due to dissolution of the parental marriage.

Nationwide, many children are subjected to frequent changes of location while living in the parental home, often with no ill effects. However, for multi-marriers, already insecure from fractured emotional involvement with family members, these moves served only to increase the sense of loneliness.

My father worked in the oil fields and we moved from one oilfield to another. I hated that. I never really felt like I really belonged. No one really accepted me.

Linda, 32, divorced 2 times.

We were always moving when I was a child. Daddy did construction work and we went where the jobs were. Everytime I got settled in school and began to make friends, we moved. I didn't mind moving when there was a job to go to, it was the moving in the middle of the night because we couldn't pay the rent that was the worse.

Fran, 35, divorced 3 times.

After a while going to school was almost funny. In one state I would be six months behind and in the next I was one year ahead (of my class). It's a wonder I learned to read much less finish school.

Bob, 37, 3rd marriage.

Multi-marriers grew up with no ties to any one place. They lack what Klapp (1975) has referred to as the symbolic reference points which enable a person to remember who he is.

You know, I don't know anyone that I can say is a childhood friend. We moved so much I never got to really know anyone and no one knew me.

Martha, 39, divorced 5 times.

Multi-marriers, on the whole, seldom lived in one locality very long. Subject to frequent moves, often for embarrassing reasons such as non-payment of rent, these persons have no memories which tie them to one particular place. They have no sense of roots, no sense of belonging.

The Effects of Disrupted Interactions:

A Loss in Identity

Klapp (1975) states that

excessive mobility also makes family relations fragile which, of course, strikes at the heart of identity. Divorce, serial marriage, desertion of children, alienation of youth from parents, dispersion of kin, insecurity of old people deprive a person of the ability to define himself by relations which should be most reliable, intimate, and meaningful (p. 45).

Multi-marriers are deprived of the intimate relationships, of the treasured recollections of childhood hiding places and swings, which help aid a person gain stability in dealing with the world and give to that person a sense of identity, a way of knowing who they are.

This lack of a sense of identity due to interchangeable homes staffed by interchangeable people is evidenced readily when one glances at the relationships between divorced parents who leave and children still living within the home. Landis (1950) pointed to the high divorce rate beginning in the United States and commented on the distinction between serial polygamy and serial monogamy. In terms of maintaining some type of ties with the former spouse, most Americans practice some form of serial polygamy. Child support, however sporadic, is generally paid. Occasional discussions between parents occur regarding the future of the children take place and most divorced parents still take at least nominal interest in the children who are left behind.

Serial monogamy, in the strictest sense, is evidenced among the homes which spawned multi-marriers. With few exceptions, once the tie is broken legally, in terms of divorce, parents, usually fathers, leave and are never seen or heard from again.

My father left when I was eight and I have never seen him again.

Linda, 27, divorced twice.

"Have you looked for him?"

Not as an adult. As a child I used to go to bar where he hung out to see if he might still go there, but then we moved, and I stopped thinking about him.

My parents were divorced when I was born. I never knew my father. A few years ago I happened to be back in the town my mother grew up in and someone pointed out my father to me.

Johanna, 27, divorced twice.

"Did you go up to him and meet him?"

No, he didn't have anything to do with me when I was young, so why now?

If the early homelife was particularly painful, often it is the children who initiate their own form of serial monogamy with parents.

My mother was no great mother when I was growing up. Last mother's day I did call her and take her out to lunch but that was the first time I had seen her in ten years.

Sandi, 29, divorced three times.

Multi-marriers grow up with no sense of belonging, either to a place or a set of people. Relationships are quickly set aside and seldom taken up again. Parents, brothers, sisters and childhood acquaintances are left behind as one era in a person's life ends and another begins. In short, long term interpersonal skills, those necessary for securing enduring relationships, are not observed by the child and appear not to be internalized in the repertoire of life experiences.

Summary: The Negated Search for Self Through Family

Weigert and Hastings (1976) describe the function of the family in terms of its importance to the development of an integrated sense of self.

The basic relationships of the nuclear family, viz., conjugal love, parental support or filial piety, and sibling ties, are central to the processes of identity formation. The relevant characteristics of these relationships are that they are particularistic, normatively defined by self and others as involving positive affect, generally requiring intense and frequent fact-to-face interaction, and based on cumulative and implicit background expectancies; thus they constitute a socially and personally defined reality with a unique history, a recognizable collective identity, and mutual claims project into the future. In a word, the family is a 'world', albeit a little one, in which selves emerge, act, and acquire a stable sense of identity and reality (p. 1172).

In terms of the purpose and importance of the family as described by Weigart and Hastings, multi-marriers, as children, were not privy to the elements necessary for the nurturing of a stable sense of identity and reality, at least to the extent this sense of self applies to the process of long-term familial relationships.

Both men and women learn during the early years that relationships are transitory at best and at worst are quickly cast aside as the situation alters. These are people who have grown up within the midst of poverty, cruelty and instability. A strong sense of identity with people or places is lacking and for the large part, isolation is the end result. Multi-marriers grow up lonely and for males, we see a turning outward, away from the social world of relationships. Females, cast aside in a sea of ever-changing fathers, learn to view themselves in terms of the social world of relationships, however, never quite finding any one person who is permanent enough with which to form a close tie.

Childhood, for these people, is preferred forgotten, for memories are painful and still generate hurt. In coming chapters, we shall see how childhood messages influence interaction as adults. We will see how the instability of relationships in early life create a standard by which multi-marriers compare, to a certain degree, their present lives.

The early years for multiple marriers were, indeed, hard years. Confusion, isolation, physical and emotional pain, alienation from family, loss of a sense of identity due to frequent relocations and frequent changing of family members characterized for most part the memories of childhood. Children learned not to place faith in such things as relationships, not to commit themselves to an entity which is fragile and lacking in substance. Perhaps Farber's concept of permanent availability is reinforced at this time.

For males, throughout the course of childhood, we see young men who grow up and place more value on individual goals, goals which have little to do with the inclusion of relationships as a mechanism for measuring success. Females, whose childhood was characterized by an

increasing sense of powerlessness, come to view themselves primarily in terms of their relationships with men. A decline in the importance of others, as fundamental in the meaning of family, is emphasized.

CHAPTER IV

FIRST MARRIAGES: BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

Introduction

Udry (1966, p.1) writes that "of all the different kinds of human relationship, each society tends to emphasize one which has particular significance to its organization". Given the social forces of industrialization and urbanization which have been dominant since the emergence of the United States, the primary ideal family type to be institutionalized within this Western culture is that of the conjugal family unit (Goode, 1959). While the changing economic situation within the United States has begun to loosen the stereotypical framework within this conjugal family operates, it is still marriage, as representative of a conjugal family form, which is institutionalized and accepted as the right and proper relationship for individuals to assume as a lifestyle commitment.

The conjugal relationship is so institutionalized within this society that it still remains as one of the few acts participated in which legitimately notes a rite of passage. We identify marriage as the normal status for adults to assume and we socialize our young to achieve this status at some time in their lives. Over 95 percent of all Americans marry at some time and for many females, marriage is "the singularly acceptable way to move from girl to woman" (Rubin, 1976, p. 41). Marriage, with its ability to bestow adult status on participants, occupies

a privileged status among the significantly validating relationships for adults in our society.

Marriage, as a cultural tradition and directive, influences us to come to the understanding that the marital relationship is the one truly legitimate way to participate in on-going society as full members and as adults. Berger and Kellner have referred to marriage as the crucial nomos building instrumentality in our society. They state that it is on the basis of marriage that, for most adults in our society, existence in the private sphere is built up (Berger and Kellner, 1964). From a higher level of analysis, marriage is representative of the established ways of organizing and participating in family life.

A more individualistic analysis of marriage shows that, for most adults, marriage is necessary in the creation and maintenance of a particular social identity which is employed for participating in on-going society. "Marriage is the social arrangement that creates for the individual that sort of order in which he can experience his life as making sense" (Berger and Kellner, 1964, p. 219). Marriage is necessary for the organization and playing out of interaction in a validly recognized fashion. In short, "the spouses mutually bestow particular and intensely affective identities as unique biographical realities" (Weigert and Hasting, 1974, p. 1172).

Marriage, while co-existing in mutually inclusive categories, can be examined from two perspectives. Marriage, as a cultural directive, influences us to come to the understanding that the marital relationship is the right and proper status to assume as participating adults in greater society. Marriage can also be seen as a necessary prerequisite in the presentation of social identities in a social world of interaction.

Throughout the course of this chapter, this dual faceted nature of marriage plays an important part in the decision making processes of multi-marriers. Differentially, according to sex, entering into the marital relationship is seen as responding to a particular role obligation arising from a cultural directive and as a mandatory component of a social self. From either point of analysis, a micro or a macro perspective, marriage produces "a world without which the individual is powerfully threatened with anomie in the fullest sense of the word" (Berger and Kellner, 1964, p. 219).

Despite the quality of family life observed by the young multi-marriers growing up in an environment of alcohol, physical violence, family hostilities, and disrupted family units, multi-marriers were very responsive to the compelling call for marriage. These individuals entered into first marriages at a relatively young age. Female multi-marriers first married between the ages of 16 and 20, with 18 being the average age at first marriage. Males, marrying for the initial time between the ages of 17 and 22, entered their first marriage around the average age of 19.

Given the circumstances of these individuals experiences with family life, why were they so intent on marriage that they first approached it at relatively tender years? In talking with these persons, the answer becomes quite clear. Multi-marriers marry for the first time for all the same reasons that everyone else in the United States marries. They respond to role obligations and seek to immerse themselves with others for the purpose of creating a sense of self. However, in following the progression of these young people into first marriages, it becomes evident that these people, as a category of persons, are so

completely responsive to cultural demands that viable options to marriage as simply not perceived. For them, to actively engage in on-going society with full rights and privileges, marriage is mandatory. The concept of choice is not a crucial element in the meaning of marriage. That they will marry is a given, it is only the matter of who they will marry which is at times problematic.

First marriages, as explored in this chapter, are examined in order to come to some understanding of the interplay of culture and social meanings as they are experienced by multi-marriers.

As noted earlier, there is a difference between males and females in the decision making processes involved in entering the first marriage. This difference is a result of the strong differential process of socialization into sex roles experienced in childhood. These various orientations to "doing" and "being" give rise to varying meanings applied to marriage by males and females. Ultimately the final decisions to enter into and depart from the first marriage are enacted differently according to the perception of social worlds as seen and experienced by males and females. Thus, understanding of first marriages as expressed and experienced by multi-marriers is presented as a function of gender identification.

The First Marriage for Males:

An Acquiescence to Roles

Male multi-marriers tend to explain their motivations for entering the first marriage almost by appeal to higher authority, that of cultural directive. Most regard this marriage to be the result of outside forces operating on them, forcing them into a decision to marry, as if

they themselves had been rendered ineffectual in the face of opposition.

I went into service right after high school. I met my first wife when I came back from service. She was 16 and working part-time as a car hop. I went to the restaurant where she was working and met her there. I was 20 at the time. We dated and then got married.

Bill, age 37, divorced 4 times

"How long did you date?"

About a month.

"Did you want to get married? Is that why you dated for such a short time?"

No, not really. You see, I was brought up to believe that if you have sex you get married.

"So you married because you were having sex with her?"

No, not completely. I was made aware of a pregnancy and that on top of having sex made me get married.

Several of the male participants in this study described pre-marital pregnancies as the motivation for first marriages. Each marriage was conceptualized as a particular situation which forced them into a marriage which would not have occurred otherwise. "I had to get married" or "I got caught" were the words most frequently used to illustrate the perceived lack of choice on the part of the male. Religion is also utilized as a coercive factor in the decision to marry.

I was 17 and she was 15 when we ran off and got married. We had to get married.

Jim, age 39, divorced 6 times.

"Had to? You mean she was pregnant?"

No, she wasn't pregnant. But we had had sex. I was taught if you had sex then you had to get married. She was the first girl I had ever touched so I had to marry her.

Jim.

Often men describe their marriages as the result of being pushed into it by social pressure.

She was a beauty queen in high school, very social person. We dated on and off for four years of high school. It was a very stormy relationship-fighting a lot and making up again. Not dating each other for a while and then getting back together. We married while I was in college.

Mike, age 36, divorced 3 times

"Why did you decide to marry?"

I think it was just expected of us. We had gone together for so long that it was the right thing to do. I didn't have any desire to get married, but everybody was waiting for us to get married, since we had survived high school and all, that it seemed like the thing to do.

Mike

Another man attributes his marriage to much the same reasons.

I married her while we were in college. She was very bright but just didn't want to go to college. We had dated for those years in high school- so when I went to college it was just assumed I'd take her with me. Looking back, I don't know why I got married. I suppose it was because it was expected of us.

Lynn, 41, presently in third marriage.

For males, the first marriage is defined as a capitulation to social pressure. No one married because they, as individuals, wanted to marry. All present themselves as victims of social coercion. Each was fulfilling the expectations of peer groups or families. Occasionally someone would plead compliance to a higher authority, God, and state that sexual intercourse was a mandate for marriage, but no one extended the traditional rationale, love, as a motivation for first marriages. Even with prodding, love was only superficially employed as motivating factor in marriage.

"You said you had to get married because it was expected. Did you love her?"

Oh, I don't know about love. There was this sexual attraction . . .

Bob, age 37, in third marriage.

I guess I might have thought I was in love but then you are supposed to think you are.

Billy, age 30, divorced 5 times.

I cared about her. You are supposed to care about the people you marry.

Bill, age 37, divorced three times.

No one married for love. If love, in some vague form, did exist, it was characterized as neither necessary or sufficient condition for marriage. Marriage was entered into as the proper response to a given set of societal conditions, a way of fulfilling expectations concerning a particular situation. Men were doing their duty in essence, at least in terms of societal expectations. Men simply did not identify this marriage as being in any way related to personal or emotional needs. Marriage was conceptualized as a set of role obligations one entered into in a contractual sense. There is no indication that marriage, as a personal experience in making sense of one's world, was entered into with the understanding that the spouse would play any significant part in the sustaining of a social identity. Marriage was viewed as a separate structure from any component part of one's real life. One simply married when one was expected to marry and not because the marriage partner was seen as being responsible for personal happiness.

Marriage as Distinct from Self

This idea of the separateness of marriage from personal experience is seen again. When asking male multi-marriers about their expectations of marriage, one is again left with a constricted definition of marriage in the male scheme of things.

I had no idea what to expect out of marriage. I had never thought about it. I guess I expected it to be like . . . marriage. You know, marriage.

Bill, age 37.

"What do you mean by 'marriage'?"

I don't know. I just never thought about it.

Another describes his same lack of understanding regarding the concept of marriage as a relationship.

I never thought about what it would be like to be married. I only thought about how I had to get married.

Ted, 39, divorced twice.

One man did have certain expectations regarding his marriage although still no real emphasis was placed on marriage as a relationship between he and his spouse.

I had no real idea about what marriage would be like when I married her. I guess I expected things to settle down somewhat. I thought because we were married things wouldn't be so stormy.

Mike, age 37, divorced 3 times.

"Why did you think things wouldn't be so stormy after you married?"

Because things are supposed to settle down once you're married.

Marriage to male multi-marriers is an interesting phenomenon. It is viewed as an act which one participates in and subsequently places on a shelf. All gave credence to the notion that one is indeed expected to fulfill his obligations by discharging this act at the appropriate time, but no one had given any thought as how one goes about the process of engaging in marriage on a day to day basis. The concept of marriage as anything more than a state of affairs, much like the weather or one's political party, was not given much introspection. Marriage is something that exists "out there", having very little to do with social interaction.

Udry (1966) had addressed the notion that Americans do not know what happens after marriage. As he explains it:

the ignorance of marital processes for the unmarried is sociological quite understandable: As a child, one interacts with parents within a parent-child relationship. There is little in this interaction which gives a child much insight into the husband-wife relationship from which he is excluded.

Furthermore, he can only observe his parents from the vantage point of his role as child and their role as parents to him (p. 269).

Udry further goes on to point out that ignorance of what constitutes the process of marriage aids in the creation of two opposing myths regarding marriage which are believed in simultaneously: the myth of living happy ever after and the myth of the drudgery of marriage.

This notion of ignorance regarding the marital relationship is seen very clearly when one examines the various related expectations of marriage. Men, on the whole, simply did not know what to expect of marriage. Given the fact that most men felt coerced into marriage and did not conceptualize marriage as being personally related to individual happiness, it is probably a safe assumption to suggest that these male multi-marriers were more cognizant of marriage as drudgery than as a state of perpetual happiness ever after.

This notion on the part of men that marriage exists but is of little personal consequence was seen earlier in this study in the chapter on the early years of multi-marriers. Female multi-marriers were acutely aware of their parent's marriages, to the point that they described the parental marriage in relational terms with themselves. Men on the other hand, acknowledged the existence of the parents marriage, but felt that it had very little to do with them personally. Marriage, like family members in the early home, is again only a peripheral component in one's life.

For male multi-marriers, the first marriage then, is seen as a static state of affairs. It is an act which is to be accomplished, not continually played out on a daily basis. You do marriage by getting married. Men don't see themselves as being married in the sense that

one constructs the marriage out of joint action.

Given the fact that the first marriage is viewed as little more than fulfillment of role obligations, it should not be surprising to see this view of marriage as drudgery reenacted within the marriage relationship itself.

I'll tell you what that marriage was like. Pure hell. I was in college and she resented the fact that she had to work while I was in school. She wanted more money. She never understood that I was trying to make things work out. I was planning for a future. I was going to school during the day, working at night and going to football practice all at the same time. She wanted more things, like she wanted to go out a lot, to the movies and parties. I didn't have time for that. I was planning for a future, for both of us but she never understood that.

Mike, 37, divorced 3 times.

My marriage was really bad. For the ten years I was married it was always the same. I worked all the time and then when I did get off work I went to shoot pool and drink beer with the guys. I didn't want to go home and play with the kids, cut the grass and make a garden. I hate all those things. My marriage was that I was just providing and bringing home the bacon. The truth is, I didn't want to be there, I just didn't want to be home at all. It wasn't fun at home. It was fun at the pool hall.

Bill, 37, divorced 5 times.

Our marriage was pretty strange. She wanted me to get a daytime job and act like a real husband. We had different goals in life. It was like the fun seemed to stop. After we got married all of a sudden it was legal and she wanted everything to be real legal-like traditional. I hated it.

Lynn, 30, divorced 3 times.

In listening to men describe their first marriages, one is left with a sense of sorrow mixed slightly with humor. The situation is reminiscent of Freud's confusion when he stated with frustration, "What does a woman want?" The implication by these men is clear. "I married her so what more does she want?"

Male multi-marriers, at least in terms of the ways they approached their first marriages, did not appear to have any understanding that the

marital relationship would need to be negotiated. The taking of the vow constituted the totality of the concept marriage, and it appears that these men somehow expected their wives to adjust to their lifestyle. It simply never occurred to them that their spouses might have expectations regarding marriage which they had not considered.

McAllister (1963) suggests that differential expectations regarding marriage partners may be created with the emergence of marital roles.

We all have preconceived ideas of what a husband should be like, and what a wife should be like; we forget that someone else is playing the role, someone else has the stage, someone else is ad libbing his way through a difficult scene. The real problem, of course, is that in the individual marriage, each spouse has a mental picture of how the other spouse should fulfill his role (p. 153).

Thus, we see male multi-marriers entering into a relationship which is based on a conceptualization of marriage as drudgery with firmly entrenched role expectations regarding their wives' participation.

This notion of rigid role expectations is seen in the short dating period most men engaged in prior to marriage. Many men dated their first wives for only a few months prior to marriage and those that had engaged in lengthy courtship described these relationships as on and off with long periods of not dating between episodes of dating. When asked if any discussion regarding marriage occurred between them and their prospective wives prior to marriage, the answer was always no. These men entered a relationship with no clearly defined strategy for interaction and with very little sense of "self" inserted in the definition. Marriage is seen as something that just happens. Marriage, for them, is a state, not a process.

The First Divorce: Relinquishing

Role Obligations

Considering the enormous amount of complacency evidenced by these men in adhering to role sets by marrying, it would not be surprising to find that leaving the marriage, i.e., abdicating responsibility, would be a painful experience. For the most part, this is true for the first marriage. Very few left the first marriage without a great deal of personal struggle and agony.

I knew I wasn't happy at home. I hated being there but leaving was hard too. I remember getting up in the middle of the night, putting on the Willie Nelson albums, drinking to dawn, going to work and coming home and doing the same thing all over again. I felt so guilty about wanting to leave her. When I finally did leave, it was a drawn out thing-moving out and moving in over and over.

Bill, age 37, divorced 3 times.

"If you didn't want to be there, why was it so hard to leave?"

I felt responsible for her. She didn't have an education or any experience. How was she going to take care of herself? It wasn't right to leave someone alone- she was like a baby.

Bill.

Or

Our marriage had deteriorated to the point that I felt there had to be something better than this. I couldn't go on in those circumstances. I owed myself more. There had to be more to life than this. So I left, finally, after we had separated many times . . . We separated so many times because I just couldn't leave her cold like that. I needed to get her prepared. I had married her and it wasn't right to just walk out on her unannounced. She needed time to look out for herself.

Lynn, age 41, third marriage.

The dissolution of the first marriage was characterized by frequent separations prior to the final act of divorce. Despite high levels of dissatisfaction and unhappiness with the marriage and the spouse, it was simply not possible for these men to walk out on their role obligations

without a great deal of thought. It was necessary to prepare their wives for their eventual departures. The problem was not in the decision to leave, that decision was firm. The delicacy of the situation revolved around the timing and the gracefulness of the exit. Each man felt the heavy weight of obligation to marriage and wished to leave in such a way as to minimize that load, by somehow insuring that the wife he no longer wanted could survive without him. Considering the fact that most had entered the marriage due to a strong adherence to societal norms, males felt that one should discard that dedication with the least amount of destruction possible.

In examining the decision-making process on the part of males to divorce, the attitude that marriage is not conceptualized as an interpersonal relationship to be negotiated is manifested again.

"When you realized that you were unhappy, did you discuss this with your wife or anyone else?"

No, I never talked to her about it. I was the one unhappy. There wasn't any reason to talk to her about it.

Mike, age 36.

I don't believe in marriage counseling. Either a marriage works or it doesn't. Talking about it isn't going to change anything.

Bob, age 37.

There wasn't any point in talking to her or anyone else about it. The only way things could change to make me happy was by my changing- learning to like living the way we were- and I wasn't going to, had no plans to change. So there wasn't any point in talking about it.

Billy, 30.

A man just doesn't talk about things like that. You just make your decision and stick to it. I was unhappy and wanted out and needed to make sure she was taken care of. When that was done then I could just leave. Talking about things don't change them.

Bill, age 37.

The decision to leave is played out in the shadow of a "John Wayne caricature". A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do. You do it as gently as possible but you certainly don't talk about it. The orientation is towards action and talk is not conceived of as action. Leaving is action and man's work. Talking is woman's work.

This notion that wives are somehow supposed to adjust themselves to the husband's life with a minimal amount of complication is seen also by this inability of men to talk with their wives about their marriages.

"You never told your wife you were unhappy?"

No. There wasn't any point to it. She was happy. I wasn't. She liked being married. I didn't. I guess she knew I was unhappy, I was hell to live with, but there wasn't anything to discuss. She liked it. I didn't. What more can you say about it?

Bill, age 37.

Indeed, what more can be said about it. It never seemed to occur to these men that perhaps the marriage relationship could be changed, somehow negotiated. Marriage was seen as one of the true "givens" in life, unalterable and impregnable. One buys a suit and then either wears it if it fits well or discards it if it doesn't. To have a suit tailored to fit well is inconceivable.

Thus, for male multi-marriers, marriage is an institutional burden one assumes when one accepts adult status in society. These men so little understood the notion that marriage should be an expression also of personal satisfaction that they never discussed with their wives their views on what constitutes a marriage. It was simply assumed that wives must indeed hold the same frame of reference as they.

First Marriage for Females

Marriage as Self

Female multi-marriers were also tuned in to the structural component of marriage within society. They understood that marriage was a reflection of adult status and responsibility. However, they, unlike their male counterparts, emphasized the interpersonal nature of the marital relationship as being of equal if not more important than the awesome fulfillment of role obligations. Remember, even as young girls these women showed a tendency to express their social worlds in relational terms.

Most females carried with them into the marriage certain expectations of the rewards that marriage would bring. They, unlike their male counterparts, appear to believe in the myth of marriage meaning happiness ever after.

I expected from marriage a home, family, my own little place. I think I expected the good part of my home as a child without the bad parts.

Sandi, 29, divorced 3 times.

For as long as I can remember I had always wanted a washer, a dryer, and six kids.

Michelle, 26, divorced 2 times.

I wanted security and a happy little relationship.

Linda, 27, divorced 3 times.

Even for those females who stated they entered their first marriages as an escape mechanism from a bad home situation, still implied in their comments are touches of relational concepts.

I had been going to college and I didn't really know what to do in life so I got married. I wanted to change him. I wanted to show him what family life was like. I figured if he was happy in a family then he would settle down.

Michelle, 26.

When I married I probably didn't know what I really did want because I had never been around a good marriage long enough to see what they were about. I just thought that if I got married I would have some security. I had never had any security and marriage meant security. Just one person to love me and care about me.

Linda, 27, divorced 3 times.

I never really thought about what I expected out of marriage. I had planned to just move in with him after high school. But my family thought sin, sin, sin and insisted we get married. I just wanted to be with him all the time so we got married.

Johanna, 27, divorced 2 times.

I loved him and I loved the way he made me feel. Until that time I didn't think my existence had ever contributed to anyone's happiness. I wanted to marry him. I didn't know, didn't think what to expect out of marriage. I just wanted to be with him.

Fran, 35, divorced 3 times.

Marriage for female multi-marriers was seen as an act which would bring to them a certain amount of personal happiness whether it resulted from the security marriage appeared to offer to them or as the end product of being with someone they cared about. Marriage was undertaken primarily to insure relationships, not primarily to answer role obligations.

From a very young age females are taught to expect men to care for them, take care of them and insure personal happiness. Even if a woman is unhappy in the parental home, the tying oneself legally to a man is often seen as the only effective way to leave the home.

Because of the way I was raised, in a physically violent home, I had to leave home. I had to get away from there. I couldn't leave home until I was married. You just weren't supposed to leave home until you married so I married.

Connie, 35, married 3 times.

I got married at 16. I had run away from home several times. I was scared of the beating at home and all that crap. I knew running away wasn't going to work. Everytime I ran away they brought me home. They kept putting me back in the house so suddenly I realized if I was married I could leave. So I

tricked him [the first husband]. I got pregnant, got married, and left home.

Pam, 30, married 3 times.

For men, marriage was seen primarily as an institution which had little direct meaning in terms of considering the other partner as important in one's life. Females were expected to adjust their lives to their husbands. Female multi-marriers very closely identified with the importance of the "other" in the marriage relationship. They firmly understood that the marriage did not exist without the necessary "other". Marriage was undertaken not to fulfill the expectations of society but to fulfill expectations of themselves. Being married, not simply getting married, represented to them their ascendancy into the adult role. To be away from home, to be with someone, to be in a happy home all emphasize the processes involved in the marital relationship. That "other", a man, was necessary for the fulfilling of personal goals. The presence or absence of the man as the means whereby they judge personal happiness is evidenced at a young age.

Diary entry, at age 18

November 12, 1963

I just haven't felt like writing in here lately. When the blues come they come full force and they did today. I'm so mixed up that I don't think I will ever get myself organized. All I want is . . . what? I think sometimes I'll keep traveling around and live, live, live. Then I wonder if I shouldn't go to college and make something of myself. There's the family part too, do I want a husband, family, and my own home? Confusion is enough to drive you to frustration and tears.

Fran, 35 years old.

Exhibited in this diary entry is the confusion of a young girl as she seeks an adequate place in society for herself. Does she want a man or does she want to live, live, live? Her next diary entry suggests that perhaps her personal happiness is dependent on a man and marriage.

November 15, 1963

Well, I can honestly say that I am happy now. I hope it lasts forever. I have been happy and have had a peace of mind--Night before last I got a cable from Dale . . . I would be so happy to have an adoring husband and later-children.

Still later

May 18, 1964

I hope I someday find someone to love and who will love me just as much. The harder I look the dimmer the future looks. From here on, time plays the cards and God willing I'll love and marry.

December 24, 1964

I get so lonely sometimes that I would give the world for someone to call my own. I want a family and a baby boy and a home.

Marriage as an Adjustment

Noted earlier was the assumption on the part of the male multi-marrier that his wife would somehow adjust her life to his without the need for very much discussion on the matter. To a large extent, female multi-marriers do indeed attempt to master this adjustment.

Several noted family sociologists have commented on this tendency on the part of women to adjust to their husbands. As Bernard (1972) explains this phenomenon:

Because the wife has put so many eggs into the one basket, of marriage, to the exclusion of almost every other, she has more at stake in making a go of it. If anything happens to that one basket, she loses everything; she has no fallback position. She tends, therefore, to have to make more of the concessions called for by it (p. 44)

Burgess and Wallin (1953, p. 331) found that the husband upon marriage maintains his old life routines, with no thought or expectation of changing them to suit his wife's wishes. Sometimes, when the wife concedes that the husband has made more adjustments, he reports himself to be quite unaware of making any; they were probably too trivial for him to notice.

Women understand the extent to which they will be expected to adjust to their husband's lifestyle. Most women are successful to some degree in this attempt to mold oneself to the husband's desires. Female multi-marriers, on the whole, appeared willing to go to great lengths in order to make the transition into their husband's world; their need to be tied to a man is so strong.

So dependent is their identity on the marital relationship that rather potent redefinitions of situations occur spontaneously during this adjustment phase. Note again a diary entry from the same young woman. At this time she has met her first husband and plans to shortly marry.

January 16, 1966

I know he loves me and wants me. We don't always kiss like we used to or pledge our love 30 times a night but I have never been happier than now because I've learned how he gives love and I've learned how he accepts my love. He'll call me Ace and I know I'm his best friend and he'll hold me and I'll cry because I know he loves me with all he has to love with. I still give my love like I used to but I've found how to interpret his words and actions correctly and now I know a slap on the rear means he loves me . . . He gives love in a way completely foreign to me but that's ok now - because I've learned to accept him and his actions and not be impatient when he doesn't express himself as I do. He bitches and complains about my driving - so he's letting me know I mean enough to him to worry about. He gets impatient when I eat too much - fine he loves me enough to want to show me off (but I gotta be slender) He sits and watches TV and never says boo to me - I know he can feel satisfied and happy just being in the same room with me. He falls asleep but I don't get mad - not anymore. I think who else can he feel so relaxed around and trust as much as me - no one. That's a grand kind of compliment . . .

Fran, 35, divorced 3 times.

Decisions to Marry

Like male multi-marriers, females were also prone to marry after very short courtships. Many marriages occurred on the spur of the moment.

I was living in a garage apartment with my girlfriend. Doug lived down below us. I knew him for several weeks. One night there was a party I went to with Doug. We got pretty drunk and Doug said 'Why don't we get married?' so our friends convinced us to wait until the next morning when we were sober. I slept with him that night and the next morning we decided to go ahead and get married. I wanted my own home and husband. So we got married.

Vicki, age 35, in third marriage.

There I was. I couldn't afford college, I didn't have a job, I hated living at home. Doug and I had dated during high school on and off. He was ready to get married. I wanted security, security, security so I figured if I got married I would finally have a home of my own and someone of my own.

Linda, 27, divorced 3 times.

I had dated my first husband for two years before. I didn't really like him all that much but he wanted to get married. I had finished college then and was teaching high school. I didn't really like teaching. I wanted my own children and a home of my own. So when I broke up with this other man I had been dating, someone I really cared about, I was hurt and looking for someone to love me. Back into my life stepped Carl, swearing he would always love me. So I thought I wasn't getting any younger so we got married.

Linda, 32, divorced twice.

Most female multi-marriers entered into the first marriage without deep consideration, often spontaneously. Marriages were frequently utilized as a mechanism for exiting from a bad situation which was generating unhappiness. Rubin (1976) states that for many young working class girls, getting married was, and probably still is, the singularly acceptable way out of an oppressive family situation and into a respected social status. No matter how escape ridden the motivation for marriage, each entered into the marriage with deeply held expectations. Each had some notion that marriage, the joining of herself with a man, would result in increased personal happiness. Most females simply expected that an emotional bonding between themselves and their husbands would occur no matter what the circumstances surrounding the initiation into marriage. These women, just like their male counterparts, worked

on the assumption that the prospective spouses held the same convictions regarding marriage as they did, the difference being that females operated on a lower level of analysis, with an expectation that the marital relationship would enhance them personally by completing a social identity. They appeared to understand that marriage involved some type of joint action but even so, it was assumed that their husbands also operated with the same understanding. Females, like males, did not discuss marriage roles and expectations prior to marriage with their spouses either.

Being Married - Females: The Failure
of Marriage Expectations

As previously mentioned, male multi-marriers entered the first marriage expecting wives to naturally adjust to their lifestyles. Females entered marriage intuitively ready for accommodation, understanding that a certain amount of adjustment on their part would be called for. The concept of marriage as a joint act was already in effect. Most assumed that given their willingness to accommodate their husbands, the marriage should fulfill expectations and bring a certain level of contentedness. However innocent, none suspected prior to marriage that such an arrangement would not work out.

Our marriage was very one-sided as far as interests went. He was active in Demolay and other organizations. He was into politics so I went to political meetings with him and sat in motel rooms reading when he didn't need me for cocktail parties. We went to his parents home every free weekend. I didn't really enjoy all that but I thought that that was what a good wife was supposed to do. I thought if I did everything real well and supported him he would come to need me in his life.

Linda, 32, divorced twice.

He was a real nice guy, a good person and he always wanted to do the right thing. When I found out I was pregnant he married me. I just wasn't happy in the marriage. I wanted a real job and all. He kept telling me it was my duty to stay at home and raise the kid so I kept trying to be happy doing that. I felt there was something wrong with me because I wasn't happy doing that.

Sandi, 29, divorced three times.

Each woman was determined initially to make the marriage work. So dedicated to the notion that a happy marriage was dependent on adjustment to their husband's wishes, that several went to extremes in order to fulfill this expectation.

Several months after we were married he started hitting me. I was pretty mouthy and wouldn't do everything he wanted me to. When I talked back to him, he would hit me. I guess I deserved being beaten. I tried to learn not to talk back to him.

Vicki, third marriage.

My husband expected me to wait on him hand and foot. I had a full time job too but it was still me that did the housework and cooking and everything else. One day I was out working in the garden and he was watching a game on TV and he called me in to get him another beer from the refrigerator. I did it. I thought that was what a good wife was supposed to do for her husband.

Connie, 3rd marriage.

Despite the high level of domestic and subservient behavior expected of them by their husbands, female multi-marriers related that they would have stayed in those marriages. Even being beaten was seen as a way of being taught the correct adjustment to their husbands. They perceived their unhappiness with the marriage to somehow be their fault, due to their inability to perform adequately as wives, or make the appropriate adjustments.

The Decision to Divorce

Female multi-marriers, like their male counterparts, generally were the initiators of divorce. Considering the extreme measures they were

willing to undertake to assure a successful marriage, it is insightful to note the reasons they give for the decision to end their marriages.

Our marriage was never good to begin with. Doug came from a real poor background and was really into the macho trip. He wouldn't even let me hold his hand in the grocery store. He had a violent temper and would beat me when he had been drinking. One day I came home sick from work and caught him in our bed with another woman. That was it. I went to a lawyer and filed for a divorce that day.

Vicki, 35, third marriage.

I knew I wasn't happy but we never fought. He was such a shrewd politician that he would make circles around my arguments. He would always end up right and I would end up thinking I was wrong. One day I finally had had enough. I confronted him. Do you or don't you love me? Am I or am I not important and first in your life? He admitted that I was third in his life after politics and Demolay. I couldn't live as being only third in his life so I told him I supposed we had better call it off. He got out a yellow legal pad and divided everything out and he left then. It was over.

Linda, 32, divorced twice.

It appears that these women were willing to submit to long periods of unhappiness in a marital arrangement as long as they felt that their husbands somehow valued them above all else. For these women, the quality of the marital relationship was measured by their perceived importance in their husbands' lives, not by the treatment they received by their husbands. Some female multi-marriers sensed shortly after marriage that their devotion to the marriage and their respective spouses was not equally matched by husbands. Some created situations in which devotion to the wife could be evaluated.

Buddy and I had been married for about three months when one night a bunch of us went out drinking. We were all pretty tight and somehow we ended up sleeping in the same bed with my girlfriend. Someone said something about Buddy and my girlfriend getting together. Buddy asked me if it would be alright and I said ok. So they had sex right then and there. The next morning I left.

Connie, 33, third marriage.

"Why did you agree to this if it would cause you to leave?"

My daddy ran around on my mother so I needed to see if Buddy would do it to me too. I tested him - severe test - but I needed to know if he really cared about me the way he should. I needed to know that I would be the only one in his life. I wasn't so I left.

Female multi-marriers inserted so much "self" into the marriage that they were willing to overcome all obstacles to remain in the marriage with the exception of one. They could not tolerate a marital relationship in which the exchange of devotion was not equal. Adjustment to the husband was expected and to a large degree actually accomplished. It was only at the time that they perceived they were not truly loved by their spouses, did not come first in his life as he did in theirs, was the decision to divorce finalized and acted upon.

Unlike male multi-marriers who needed many separations to finally complete the act of ending the first marriage, women did not participate in long drawn out separations. Once the evidence of non-equality of devotion was presented and evaluated, wives left their husbands with very few even considering a separation. If the husband did not love them totally in the manner they felt necessary for the continuance of the marriage, then the marriage was effectively over and done with and only the legal procedures remained.

Sure, I was unhappy for a long time with him. He would put me down and sometimes hit me when we were alone at home. I decided to divorce him one night when we were out at a bar with friends drinking. Before, when we would fight he would make up and say he loved me and I would accept that. But that night he picked a fight with me in front of the other people and called me names. That was it. If he really loved me he wouldn't treat me like that in public. I threw a beer in his face and left. We didn't actually get a divorce for several months later but the marriage was finished at that time.

Linda, 27, divorced three times.

The day I left him he had been gone with the guys hunting. He came home and they all wanted supper. He said, 'Go fix supper for me, bitch.' And that was that. If he cared so

little for me that he would act that way in front of his buddies, I wasn't staying. I put on my coat and left and the next day filed for divorce.

Martha, 39, divorced five times.

We had decided to separate to give him time to think it all out. I wanted him to really want me. I wasn't thinking about divorce at that time. I just wanted him to come to realize what our marriage meant. We decided to get back together so we went to my parents house for the weekend. He went out drinking with a friend of his and didn't get to my parents house until after three in the morning. That was it--the marriage was finished. I wanted a divorce.

Vicki, 30, third marriage.

Notice in each of these stories the social nature of the decision to divorce. Each decision was made while in the presence of persons other than the husband. Even if the husband beat the female, argued with her violently in the privacy of their own home, it was still possible for the female to rationalize his behavior and attributed it to being her inability to adequately adjust to her husband. At the point the marital relationship went public, so to speak, the woman then realized that indeed her husband did not truly care for her. Face, in Goffman's (1969) sense, could no longer be maintained and the painful truth of the travesty of marriage was immediately dealt with.

Female multi-marriers were so tied to the social nature of marriage, the essence of their identity being derived from that marriage, that the decision of divorce was preceded only by the social death of the marital relationship. Marriage was no longer conceived of as a joint act on the part of the two partners involved. Only one, the female, was still attempting to create a happy and successful marriage. When the delusion of joint involvement was publicly displayed as being false, the female reconciled herself to the loss of her marriage and subsequently divorced. In essence a successful degradation ceremony had occurred and female multi-marriers discarded the damaged identity.

The Commonalities of First Marriages for Males and Females

This chapter was written on the assumption that the first marriage and divorce was experientially different for males and females. However, there is one factor found in common in all the marriages discussed which, in and of itself, created hardship and interactional barriers for the participants. This one difficulty experienced jointly by male and female multi-marriers has to do with the problematic nature of social categories. Goffman (1963) explains the utilization of social categories as it applies to marriage in this way:

In our society to speak of a woman as one's wife is to place this person in a category of which there can be only one current member, yet a category is nonetheless involved, and she is merely a member of it. Unique, historically entangled features are likely to tint the edges of our relationships to this person; still at the center is a full array of social standardized anticipations that we have regarding her conduct and nature as instance of the category, 'wife', for example, that she will look after the house, entertain our friends and be able to bear our children. She will be a good or a bad wife, and be this relative to standard expectations, ones that other husbands in our group have about their wives too. . . . Thus whether we interact with strangers or intimates, we will find that the finger tips of society have reached bluntly into the contact, even here putting us in our place (p. 53).

So despite the fact that Udry (1966) suggests we have little knowledge concerning what actually occurs after the marriage ceremony, marriage is entered into with the firm understanding that to become married represents gaining membership into a new group or category. "To be married is to be placed in a special relationship to another person-a relationship whose boundaries have already been established and whose general shape has already been determined" (Udry, 1966, p. 23).

The problematic nature of social categories for multi-marrieds lies within the overwhelming sense of faith that males and females place in this belief system. They each understand totally that marriage implies a social reconstitution into a new classification, that of husband or wife. Unfortunately, as it turns out, definitions of marriage, the meaning of the social membership, is not congruent. For males, accepting membership into the club of husbands also means accepting marriage as drudgery. For wives, happiness ever after is expected to be the result of entry into the role of wife. Both men and women share the understanding of the impact this new social category will have on their lives; it is the meaning applied to categorizing which is utilized separately.

Summary

Male and female multi-marriers entered into and made decisions to leave the first marriage for differing reasons. Males primarily married in response to cultural directives in the form of pre-marital pregnancies, pre-marital sexual activities, and peer pressure in the form of expectations to marry. Marriage was seldom thought of as a relationship which would be personally enhancing. Females, on the other hand, after years of being socialized into viewing marriage as the tying of one's social identity with a man, did enter the first marriage with high expectations that such a venture would be personally rewarding. Thus males and females entered into marriage with differing degrees of interest in marriage as a joint action. Females expected to undergo varying amounts of change in their lives while males had considered the adjustment to marriage as only requiring a slight, if any, degree of personal involvement.

For males, getting married, the act of marriage itself, was sufficient response to social pressures to marry. They had fulfilled role obligations and considered themselves as having graduated into adult status. For females, it was the routinized attempt to put together an ongoing joint venture, the day to day enactment of marriage, that was seen as the basis for conceptualizing themselves as having achieved a successful identity and consequently the transition into adulthood. This point is seen most clearly in the differing responses to divorce. When asked to explain their feelings about themselves after the divorce was complete, men generally answered in ways which identified the finality of that chapter of their lives. "I just felt overwhelming relief" or "I felt like I had just been released from jail" were the usual variations offered. Women, on the other hand, were left with a sense of incompleteness and inadequacy. "I felt like a failure". "I felt like I was worthless. I couldn't keep my marriage together so what good was I?" Women, it appears, were stigmatized by the destruction of the first marriage. Men were not.

Having once been married, having responded to social pressures in the appropriate manner, men could continue to conceptualize themselves as adequate persons. Women, stigmatized by divorce and feeling socially inadequate, were not able to sustain for themselves the notion of having successfully responded to societal demands.

Stein (1981) discusses the decisions to marry and divorce as being based on a series of pushes and pulls into and out of a particular situation. From Stein's perspective, pushes represent negative factors in a situation while pulls represent attractions to a potential situation. Utilizing this framework we can view male multi-marriers as

having been pushed into the first marriage. To not marry, given the various circumstances of peer pressure, pre-marital pregnancy and sexual intercourse, would have resulted in their remaining in a situation which would have negative consequences. They entered into marriage to avoid these unpleasant responses, and not due to the inherent attractions marriage held for them.

Women entered into their first marriage due to the pulling effect marriage held for them. Having been socialized into acceptance of themselves as adequate individuals only upon marriage, then marriage can be seen as being an attractive solution for the completion of a joint and total social identity.

Decisions to divorce can also be viewed from Stein's perspective. Due to the public destruction of a joint social identity, female multi-marriers were pushed into divorce. Divorce held no attraction for these women who so acutely felt the stigmatizing nature of the act. Men, unhappy in the demands placed upon them by marriage, were enticed into divorce by the attractions of renewed bachelorhood. Life was simply more fun at the pool hall, remember, and while arranging for the post-divorce situation of the wife was demanding and required skillful maneuvering, still these individuals continued to seek the freedom of the single life again.

Thus, again, just as in the social responses we found to the commonalities of poor early childhoods, males and females begin together the journey into early marriage and divorce, each experiencing similar situations in differential ways. Pre-marital pregnancies, peer expectations, pre-marital sexual involvements, and desires to enter into the status of adulthood are processed and expressed in various ways, with the commonality of response being defined by sex.

CHAPTER V

SECOND MARRIAGES: STARTING OVER

Introduction

In the previous chapter an understanding of the ways in which multi-marriers conceptualize marriage was presented. For men, marriage frequently was seen as a status conferring act and was entered into in response to role obligations. For females, marriage was perceived as having intense personal relationship to self and was sought as a means for creating a total social identity. For male multi-marriers divorce occurred when the weight of role obligations became too heavy. Female multi-marriers sought divorce in response to social stigma created by the public viewing of a defective marital relationship.

Divorce, for multi-marriers, should not be viewed as a rejection of marriage, but rather as representative of the high priority given to this relationship. These persons are so tied to the notion of marriage as the mechanism for interacting in society as capable and complete individuals that multi-marriers continue to seek marriage even after the somewhat traumatic destruction of their initial marital attempts. Attention is drawn then to the acute necessity of marriage as an identity-bestowing apparatus for these people.

In this sense, remarriage for multi-marriers can be discussed as an act which is undertaken in an attempt to rectify the sense of identity loss experienced through divorce. Weigert and Hasting (1977) in their

discussion of identity loss within a familial context, suggest that divorce can be viewed as loss at the level of interactional and significant others.

Such loss may be conceptualized as 'identity loss', the destruction or denial of a particular, meaningful, and positively affective self-other bond which has constituted a central personal identity for self. Identity refers to both a cognitive and an affective sense of a continuous and consistent self as socially situated by others' appraisals and personally projected onto others. It seems axiomatic that both personal existence and social order require such a sense of identity (p. 1173).

While personal existence and social order can be and most frequently are one in the same, in terms of multi-marriers, however, identity for male multi-marriers implies a concentration on the requirements for social order which are generated by marriage. Female multi-marriers, on the other hand, are concerned with the totality of marriage as personal existence. In this sense then, divorce can be seen as identity loss and remarriage may be viewed as an opportunity to regain a sense of identity for multi-marriers as a whole.

Often the dissolution of the first marriage with its inherent aspects of identity loss is presented in popular literature as an analogy to death. Divorce is seen as creating social death. Given this particular bonding of divorce with death, many family writers advocate a certain cooling period after divorce. A grief and mourning period is recommended and it is felt that the individual needs some time alone in order to restore a sense of balance (Waller, 1930; Hunt & Hunt, 1977; Weiss, 1975; Westoff, 1977).

The conceptualization of divorce as social death may indeed be quite valid for multi-marriers, at least in terms of the interactional barriers created for a good portion of them by divorce (Brandwein,

1977; Goode, 1956). However, little evidence is seen which indicates that these individuals undergo any extensive mourning and grief period at all. Very little, if any, time is spent in reflecting on the history of the first marital relationship. Multi-marriers do not concentrate on gaining insight into the problems which plagued their first marriages. The past is put behind them and all energy is centered on future relationships. In short, bridges are burned and no lessons are learned.

Like the Phoenix, these individuals arise from their own ashes and rapidly seek out new relationships. They remarry in very short order. The average time spent single between the first and second marriage is 13 months. Male multi-marriers have generally remarried within 11 months while females take slightly longer and remarry within 14 months. For over 80 percent of these persons, the marriage does not mark the beginning of the new intensive relationship. Most of these individuals had left first spouses and were living with future spouses within three to four months. Very little time is actually spent alone without engaging in a heterosexual relationship. New relationships are sought as soon as the old are dead, often without allowing time for the "body to become cold".

Considering the rapidity with which multi-marriers engage in new relationships, one is left with the conclusion that multi-marriers are individuals who are strongly drawn to marriage and dyadic relationships. In exploring the remarriage and subsequent divorce experience of multi-marriers, there begins to emerge a focus on remarriage as an attempt to restore social order and regain identity loss. The behavior evidenced by many multi-marriers appear to establish credibility for Goode's (1956) conclusion that remarriage represents a solution to the ambiguous

status of being divorced. Hunt (1966) also noted that many divorced persons do not consider themselves wholly successful until they remarry. Additionally, as Bernard points out (1956), contemporary community attitudes appear to be receptive toward remarriage for the divorced. However, as we progress through the course of the biography relating remarriage experiences, there appears a new element. For some, the meaning of marriage becomes altered as the individual incorporates interactional skills with past experience.

Given the fact that initial marriage and divorce impacts differently on males and females due to differential perceptions of social phenomenon, it should hold true that remarriage and divorce, as experienced by multi-marriers, falls also within this pattern. "His" and "her" constructions of reality as they pertain to second marriages are evidenced by both males and females as they relate their life experiences. Meanings emerge and are utilized differentially by each sex, congruently, biographical histories of remarriage are also offered to the reader as a function of this differential processing of reality.

In short, males and females continue to share common life experiences but each similar episode is interpreted differently.

Starting Over: The Feminine Way

Divorce as a Failure

For the female, the first divorce represents a sense of failure as a person. These are women who have been socialized into expecting the marriage relationship to fulfill their lives, to create the cement which binds together for them a social identity. When divorce occurs, these

women are left with a fragmented social identity, an incompleteness of self which evidents itself in overwhelming feelings of inadequacy. As Kraus (1979, p. 115) points out, "an individual whose value system says that a divorced person is a failure, and a person without a mate is worthless, will most certainly experience a great deal of distress if he finds himself in that position".

I felt like such a failure. I had gotten married because that was what a girl was suppose to do. I waited on him hand and foot because that was what a wife was suppose to do. When I got divorced I didn't know what to do, I didn't know what I was suppose to do. I only knew that I didn't do what I was supposed to do - that was stay married.

Connie, 33, 3rd marriage.

After my divorce and I was on my own I didn't know what to do. I needed to know that men would find me attractive. I needed to be validated as a woman. I didn't think anyone would ever want me again.

Fran, 35, divorced three times.

All too often these feelings of inadequacy are expressed as fears concerning their ability to function alone, devoid of a man in their lives.

After the divorce I was so afraid. I was afraid to date and I had never lived alone before in my life. I was afraid to go out of my house at night. I felt like a single woman living alone was asking for it. I kept all the lights on in the house all night long and I wouldn't answer my phone if it rang after dark. I was terrified of being by myself.

Johanna, 27, divorced twice.

Others expressed their fears of inadequacies behind a front of bravado.

After my divorce I got real tough. I figured men wouldn't want to go out with someone who was divorced so I figured I had better learn to make it on my own. I didn't think anyone would ever look after me again so I would make myself be strong and look after myself. I told myself I could and would learn to not let the mechanic take me on car repairs just because I was a woman. I just got tough.

Sandi, 29, divorced three times.

Despite fears for the future and strong feelings of inadequacy, none of these women ever seriously considered returning to the ex-spouse. The old marriage was not seen as a cure for the sense of failure these women were experiencing.

I felt real low after the divorce. I was disappointed in myself. I kept thinking if I had only been stronger, had only put up with him more or been more tolerant. I felt like I had failed somehow. I felt like it was my fault because I wasn't good enough.

Linda, 27, divorced three times.

"If you felt this way, why didn't you consider going back with your husband?"

No, no. I knew that marriage was over and I couldn't, didn't want to go back. I just felt that maybe if I were a better person it wouldn't have happened the way it did. I knew it [the divorce] wasn't my fault but I felt like it was. I didn't want to go back because nothing would change but I felt like it was my fault.

Linda.

For this woman, like so many others, her sense of identity had hinged on being married. To fail at a marriage no matter how great the justification was internalized as a failure. Each understood that her divorce was necessary and that to return to the marriage would not be wise, however, each conceptualized themselves as having somehow been responsible for the shattering of a dream. This sense of responsibility for failure was seen over and over even as women told of husbands' beating them.

When he first beat me I guess I felt like it was my fault. I guess I deserved it.

Vicki, 35, third marriage.

Thus, when the marriage ended, sometimes due to repeated beatings, females continued to experience a sense of failure because they had not accepted the beatings, although intellectually they realized this punishment was not deserved.

Remarriage as Emotional and Financial Security

This sense of failure and inadequacy often combined to create social pressure which pushed the newly divorced woman into another

relationship. Most tell of meeting their second husbands shortly after the first divorce and rushing into another marriage.

I was a student in Peds and was the resident. He called me at home and told me he was going through a divorce. I understood how hard that could be and went out with him. Only later did I find out he was just separated and not divorced. By then it was too late. . . . We were living together and I told him to get a divorce or get out of my life. So he filed.

Linda, 32, divorced twice.

"If you didn't want to date a married man, why did you continue to see him when you found out he was still married?"

I like fixing breakfast for a man. I like going out with a man and knowing that I am with him. I just don't see how you can be happy without being married. Marriage is your adult fulfillment. I wanted to be married and I was in love with him by then. We were having sex and it bothers me to have a sexual relationship with someone I am not married to. Besides, do you have any idea what it is like to be my age and try to find available men? Most men wouldn't even talk to me when they found out I was a doctor.

Linda.

"Being a doctor isn't enough?"

I am an independent person and I can do anything I want but I like having someone, a man, have his arms around me. I need that, despite everything else I have I need that too.

Most multi-married females tell of marrying for the second time in order to secure for themselves some aspect of femininity which was missing.

I met my second husband shortly after my divorce and he moved in with me soon after. We lived together for three months before we got married. I wanted children so I married him to have children. We got along alright so I figured why not get married.

Pam, 30, third marriage.

I had been doing a lot of partying and one night I met the most gorgeous man I had ever seen. I was convinced that if I didn't marry him no one would ever want me again. I felt lucky he was paying attention to me. I wanted so badly for us to be a family. I wanted another family so badly. I wanted a father for my son and I wanted to be a wife again.

Fran, 35, divorced three times.

For others, the drawing attraction to marriage lay in the financial security such a relationship would make available.

After my divorce I met this man I dated for about a year. We broke up even though I cared a lot for him. I moved to another town and met this CPA. He made lots of money. I could have everything I ever wanted. Money, clothes, go to school. So I married him.

Linda, 27, divorced three times.

I was living with my grandparents because I couldn't make it alone financially. Doug wasn't paying any child support. I met this policeman and everyone kept telling me I should get married. My grandparents kept telling me I could have my own home and a father for my daughter. So I married him.

Vicki, 35, third marriage.

Female multi-marriers entered second marriages for a variety of reasons. Most were pushed into remarriage by attempts to salvage fragments of self-conception. Others simply capitulated to the harsh reality of living alone and financial insecurity.

The White Knight Redefined

When discussing characteristics of the first husband which aided in the decision to marry, most females generally made some reference to an emotional attachment they felt for the husband. Most stated that they had been in love when they married. Curiously, few of these women made reference to love as the motivating factor for remarriage. With few exceptions, love is mentioned only as an after-thought.

"Why did you marry this man?"

Well, he wasn't as smart as my first husband. He didn't seem as intelligent but he was nicer. He seemed like he would be successful. I thought he would make a good husband.

Johanna, 27.

He was a better looking man than I was a woman. I think I married him because I thought he was my last chance.

Fran, 35.

I kind of admired him. He was a strong person and always got his way. I admired that kind of strength.

Sandi, 29.

I really don't know why I married him. We had this long distance phone relationship and I guess I kind of just got caught up in it. I was so tired of being alone then and I wanted to be married. I had been working and he said he wanted me to stay at home and that sounded real good at the time. So I married him.

Michelle, 26.

He always said the night he met me he fell instantly in love with me. He was just so sweet and kind and good. We lived together for a year and then he said either marry me or I am leaving. I didn't want him to leave so I married him.

Connie, 33.

I liked him and he was real involved with his career. I figured I would be pretty well left alone. I would be married, have everything I needed in terms of money and would be left alone for the most part. So I married him. He was a nice man.

Linda, 27.

The second marriage, it appears, is not necessarily a marriage which is based on love. With one exception, none of these women remember themselves as being really in love at the time of marriage. Compared to emotional responses elicited by the first husbands, it would seem these women entered into second marriages for more rational reasons; to provide home for themselves and their children, to gain financial security, to simply be married again, and not for the romantic notions which characterized first marriages. Weigert and Hasting (1977) have predicted this response as the possible result from previous painful identity loss due to family disruption.

One strategy may be pursued which involves the redefinition of the family as constituted by more universalistic and rationalized relationships. Marriage may be defined on a rational, utilitarian, autonomous, and purely contractual basis. The construction of marriage . . . as such may allow the contracting parties to avoid the experience of particularistic identity loss with respect to the spouse (p. 1182).

The attempt to become more realistic or rational towards marriage can be evidenced in the qualities sought in a new husband. Women now look for men who are nice, potentially successful, or have a set amount of money and these qualities superceded romantic notions of love.

Interestingly enough, in terms of meeting social identity needs, female multi-marriers married both times for the same reason, that is, to establish selfhood in marriage. The difference lies in the explanation given for marriage by these respondents. These women perceived themselves as having engaged in an analysis of past marriages and decided that this new marriage would be more practical. They set aside what they considered immature vocabulary of motives, that is love, and choose instead to concentrate on marriage as a utilitarian tool. Marriage became a practical endeavor.

In short female multi-marriers entered into second marriages with altered expectations. Marriage was no longer conceptualized as living in never-never land with "Prince Charming". Marriage instead was seen as a means to secure a desired lifestyle. Having been hurt by the magic of romantic love, these women were no longer willing to partake of the hair of the dog that bit them. Love was out, practicality was in. Marriage was the ultimate goal. A man was needed to secure that desired marriage and tape up fractured egos. The man no longer needed to be wonderful, he only needed to be nice and potentially successful. The need to tie oneself to a man was still the generating motivation for remarriage, however, the criteria for being the man had lessened. White knights no longer needed to be perfect.

The Disenchantment of Second Marriages

Considering the fact that these women entered into second marriages

rapidly with altered expectations concerning the romantic nature of the marital relationship, it is interesting to note the enactments of these practical marriages.

"What was this second marriage like?"

Jerry was always going out with other women, even from the very first. I soon realized that he had only married me so he would be able to have his daughter with him.

Vicki, 35.

After a while I began to see that he had only married me because of my financial support. He wanted to go to college but couldn't on his own. I had some money saved and I could work to support him.

Fran, 35.

I had thought I would love being at home, not working and seeing a lot of the country. I didn't. I went crazy staying at home. He wouldn't settle down to one job so we moved all the time. I hated living in motels. He thought it was all in my head. I thought it was too because I thought that that was what I wanted. And when it wasn't, I figured I had to be crazy.

Michelle, 26.

We lived together for a year before we married. After we married we started fighting. Suddenly we no longer trusted each other. We had a love-hate relationship. I don't understand it. I had no reservations about marrying him because the year we lived together was not bad. I don't understand what happened.

Sandi, 29.

And still, from the diary of a woman who wanted to create a new family, secure a father for her son:

Jim is a good father to Jay and Jay is already a daddy's boy. It makes me happy to see them play together and do things together. Jim is the only one who can feed Jay with any degree of success. With all the happiness I see between Jay and Jim there seems to be something missing between Jim and myself. It makes me so unhappy I want to die. It seems to me there is no closeness between us concerning things that touch a person's heart. The only thing of immense value that we share is Jay. I feel like I've failed completely as a wife.

Fran, 35.

Second marriages for these women represented a second chance at securing

a concept of self. The White Knight had been redefined and these women had entered into second marriages with an expectation of success given the transformation of requirements regarding mates. However, these marriages also ended in what they perceived as failure and so anomie was intensified. Notice that the meaning of marriage, inasmuch as it implies happiness ever after with one mate had not been altered. Marriage, as a medium for securing a social self, still reigns. Having redefined the White Knight on a more practical basis, these women were subjected to confusion and dismay when the remarriages failed. Most regard the dissolution of the second marriage with ambivalence and for many, years later, nagging questions still remain.

I don't know what happened to it. I was so sure this one was right.

Sandi, 29.

I just don't understand it. I thought this time I would be married for life.

Johanna, 29.

It didn't make any sense. I did everything right and it still fell apart. Even today I don't know what went wrong. I was so sure.

Linda, 32.

Renewed Adjustments to Husbands

For a period of time beginning with the first realization that their marriage was on shaky ground, these women often endured extreme measures in an attempt to stabilize a rocky marriage. Attempts to adjust to their husbands were often heroic.

When we first got married we had agreed to live equal distance from our work. We would both commute equally. But he found a house which required me to drive almost two hours a day to my work. I didn't want to do it. But soon I realized he was going to live there with me or without me and I was trying so hard to make that marriage work I did it. He drove ten minutes to his work and I drove two hours for over a year.

Linda, 32, pediatrician.

I just knew in my heart he was seeing other women. He denied it but I knew it anyway. I didn't want to admit it. He had me convinced that the reason we didn't have sex frequently was because I was a nympho. I was crazy and wanted it all the time. He was normal. Normal hell, he was just too tired from other women to take care of me. But I let him send me to a psychiatrist anyway to 'cure' me of being a nympho. At that stage I was willing to do anything to keep things together.
 Fran, 35.

My second husband was just like my father. He broke my nose, he broke my arm. The marriage was going so bad. I fell into the trap so many women do. I had a baby. I thought that would straighten things up. Even when he beat me up and the police came in, I couldn't arrest him. If he was in jail we could never work things out.
 Pam, 30.

In the first marriage the social nature of information relating to the deterioration of the marital relationship created the impetus for divorce for these women. But by the second marriage, so tied to the concept of marriage are they that even public knowledge of the state of the marriage is not sufficient grounds for divorce. Others are allowed glimpses of the marriage and still the marriage continues. Neither policemen or psychiatrists are sufficient grounds for dissolving the marriage.

The Second Divorce: Intensified Anomie
or Impetus for Change

Despite the intense desire to remain married in the face of potent obstacles, divorce did occur. Most marriages ended on the average within three years. For half of these women, divorce was never seen as an answer to poor marital relationships and finally it was the husband who left the family over the protest of the wife.

I finally filed. I didn't want to but he wasn't staying and there wasn't anything left that I could do.
 Johanna, 27.

The military sent him to Germany and he was suppose to send for us when he found housing. I never heard from him for almost a year. I finally went to the JAG office and they had him get in contact with me. It was obvious he didn't want us with him and he didn't want me. He told me to get a divorce. There was nothing I could do. He was over there and I was over here so I finally agreed to it.

Fran, 35.

From the very beginning things were bad. But I wanted a child. I was already divorced once and had no children. He had children from a previous marriage and didn't want any more. But I did and I thought once the baby was here he would change. He didn't . . . I finally asked him if he was at all happy. He said no, he didn't think he was meant to be married and that we had better split. You can't hold on to someone who doesn't want to be with you so I had to let him go.

Linda, 32.

For a few women, the decision to leave the marriage behind began slowly to germinate over a lengthy period of time. Generally, for those women who elected to divorce rather than those who were left by husbands, divorce as an answer to a bad marital relationship began slowly as part of a process which lead to a questioning of their determined acceptance of role conceptualizations. One young woman described her decision to divorce her husband equivalent to having a veil lifted from her face.

If you are not married to that person, the person can be nice to you, good to you. It's easy if you are not married. When the marriage started going bad I started wondering why I was so unhappy, why I was sitting up at night and crying. It finally, slowly began to sink in. I was the one who had to do everything. We both worked and I put in longer hours then he did yet I was the one who did all the cooking and cleaning and dish washing. He did nothing. It slowly began to dawn on me that maybe that was unfair. But it isn't all his fault. He, and men, are the way they are because women are the way we are. You spend the first part of your life being influenced by others. I was suppose to get married so I did. I was suppose to have a baby so I did. I was unhappy and I didn't understand why. One night I realized that just because my mother bought Rainbow bread doesn't mean I have to buy Rainbow bread. Just because she cut up my father's meat for him doesn't mean I have to cut up my husband's meat. It was like a flash of lightning hit me. I didn't have to be unhappy

because I was doing everything I was suppose to. I could change. Someone is suppose to take care of me. Can I take care of me? I decided, yes I can! I can take care of me and my daughter and I can make it. One month later I left him and I have never looked back.

Connie, 33.

Another describes her changing attitudes differently.

All I had ever wanted out of life was a washer and dryer and six kids. I had tried twice to make that dream come true. When the second marriage started going bad I finally realized that maybe I needed to change my dream rather than just my husband.

Michelle, 26.

The realization that perhaps one needs to change oneself, the intensity of the dependency on men or the mindless repetition of social acts simply because mother did them, comes to only a few women. Most continue on in the understanding that if marriages continue to fail, the fault must lie in the choice of husbands, not in the manner in which marriage is acted out on a day to day basis. Marriage is never characterized as the villain. Only husbands are seen as not contributing to the sustaining of mutually constructed definition of reality. Frequently these women judge themselves very harshly and attempt to explain the failure of the second marriage as being due to some inadequacy on their part. Note that it is not marriage which is characterized as evil, when blame is laid these women judge themselves, not marriage.

I decided I was pretty rotten because anybody that couldn't keep a man over somebody that looked as ugly as Phyllis did.

Martha, 39.

Today down deep I know that not all men are assholes. However, I'm not willing to put up with too much. I get bored dating really straight men. I think my next husband should be someone like my step-father. He's intelligent and caring. But nice men bore me. Is that a flaw in me?

Michelle, 26.

After two divorces I have to begin to think that I am looking at the wrong kind of guy. Why isn't marriage like Hart to Hart [television program]? It just doesn't seem like it

should be that hard to get along with someone if you work at it. Why can't I pick the right kind of guys? If I decide to think about marrying again I am running to the nearest psychiatrist. I want to know this time I haven't made another poor choice.

Linda, 32.

What other people have in marriage is what I want so it must be the men I choose to marry.

Sandi, 29.

Over and over the theme is constantly replayed. Marriage is not bad, some way, some how, the choice of husbands is erroneous. It is as if the cliché that hope springs eternal in the human heart is totally validated. These women advocate the belief that successful marriage is dependent upon learning appropriate mate selection processes. These women still strongly advocated the notion that lurking somewhere out there, hidden behind some bushes or casually eating breakfast at the local MacDonald's, is the perfect spouse. The White Knight in terms of being the one man who can bring them total happiness in marriage reigns and the quest is one of discovering the knight who will make all dreams come true. One woman describes this tendency on the part of female multi-marriers concisely:

I feel like I am getting old and Mr. Right better come along soon and announce himself to me. I have wasted so much of my life looking for Mr. Right. I want to share and rely and trust in someone and I have not found him yet.

Johanna, 27.

And so the search continues.

The Quixotean Quist: Obstacles to Marriage

Approximately half of the women interviewed were presently divorced from their second husbands and had not yet remarried. Most of these women were engaged in some type of intensive relationship with a man. All were ambivalent about the future of these relationships. None felt

secure with the knowledge that Mr. Right had been found. Despite the strong motivation and belief that this special someone needed to be discovered before attempting marriage again, most of these women were immobilized by fear. They remained in these not so perfect relationships for fear of either not finding Mr. Right or due to the sheer inability to gather strength for the quest.

I hate to be alone so I would rather be married. Loneliness overrides what a person is really like. I have been living with Gene for over a year but I won't marry him because he is not good father material.

Johanna, 27.

"But you say you want to get married again. Why are you living with someone who you feel you won't ever marry? Doesn't this prevent you from perhaps finding someone you would be willing to marry"?

I guess so. But you don't understand. I am afraid of being alone. If I were to look for the right man I would have to leave Gene for now and then I would be alone. I guess I keep thinking maybe I'll run into him [Mr. Right] at TG&Y or the grocery store and then I won't have to be alone.

Johanna, 27.

Right now I'm dating the nicest man- so warm and kind. But I just don't love him. Why don't I fall in love with someone like him? Maybe I just ought to marry this guy and maybe it will work out. He's not the one but maybe he is close enough. I don't know. I know I won't marry him. I guess I should date around some but he's here. I stay busy with work and don't have the time really to party. He's not the perfect man for me but for the moment, he's the only game in town.

Linda, 32.

The search for the elusive mate is a never-ending cycle, beginning generally with the second husband and continuing on through three or four marriages.

I got married five times because I had all this hero ideal. you know, this is my husband and everything is going to be beautiful and we're going to live happily ever after. Of course, that's the way it's been every time I got married. It would last maybe three months.

Martha, 39.

And so they divorce after a might struggle to somehow fit their husbands into the role of Mr. Right. And when the square peg does not fit into the round hole, the search is on again for the peg which will fit perfectly. Only a few, a very lonely few, begin to understand that perhaps it is their conceptualization of how marriage is to be enacted which should be examined. Most continue on concentrating on the union of the perfect man with the perfect marriage.

Their dismay and agony over the treacherous road traveled to reach this goal creates incredible feelings of inadequacy and incompetency. Every woman interviewed displayed this sense of uncertainty and insecurity. Each, in their own words, sought counsel from the researcher. "You are the expert. You tell what I am doing wrong." "Why do you think I am choosing the wrong men?" Always, sadly, always, the emphasis is on developing skills for identifying Mr. Right. No one considered that perhaps the ways in which they engaged in the practice of marriage should be re-examined. The continual theme replays. Marriage is right, it is simply the men whom they choose to marry who create the deficit. "Show me how to choose the right man and I will show you that I can have a successful marriage."

The anomie intensifies. The first marriage, based on some notion of love, is destroyed. The second marriage, utilizing a more rational approach, still fails to be consummated. The mythological state of the perfect marriage with the right man fails to materialize. The search continues and the Don Quixote myth of wedded bliss lives on.

Starting Over: A Masculine Flair

Securing Positive Attributes Through Marriage

Male multi-marriers, like female counterparts, are seldom alone for very long. They quickly form new relationships immediately after the first divorce and have usually remarried in very short order. Most remarriages for men, as for women, follow after a brief time of living together with the future spouse.

There appears to be several points of departure from the route taken by their female counterparts in terms of entering into a new marriage. Men have a tendency to conceptualize and describe these new spouses in more glowing terms than do female multi-marriers. With very few exceptions, male multi-marriers seldom referred to any physical attributes of beauty first wives possessed but yet some notion of physical attractiveness is always emphasized when attempting to explain rational for entering into the second marriage.

She was a good looking woman. I mean a fine looking woman. She walked by my apartment one day and I turned to a buddy and said, 'See that fox. She is going to be my next wife.'

Bill, 37, married three times.

I fell for her the first time I went out with her. She was nothing short of beautiful. Big knock-out eyes and a super figure. She was the kind of woman that made other men turn around and stare.

Lynn, 30, divorced twice.

This wife I really cared for. She was attractive, everything I had ever wanted in a woman. She was smart, pretty, an athlete and educated. A real winner in every sense of the word.

Lynn, 41, married three times.

Also considered in the assessment of the second wife are qualities found lacking in the first wife.

She was so mature, bright and attractive. I respected her more than anything. I thought she would be good for me.

Mike, divorced three times.

My second wife was different. She was the more dominant, she was more of a leader. My father respected her where he didn't the first because she would stand up to him. I like a gutsy woman. She was confident.

Jim, 39, divorced six times.

Second marriages were entered into not through the social pressure of premarital pregnancy or intercourse and not because it was expected of them. Male multi-marriers conceptualized these marriages in terms which seem to imply that these wives were chosen on the basis of some personal qualities which these men admired. One is struck by the notion that attractiveness or intelligence was the criteria utilized for entry into remarriage. In describing these marriages men do not use words or phrases which connote any sense of entrapment into marriage, which was often the case in the first marriage. Second marriages, then, were seen as having been entered into freely, devoid of the cloak of social coercion which so frequently characterized the bitterness of the first marriages.

Were second wives that much more attractive than first wives?

Obviously, for the husbands they appeared to be. However, beauty is in the eyes of the beholder and perhaps certain social factors were at play which influenced perceptions of beauty. Given the emotional hardships encountered when leaving first marriages, a vocabulary of motives which justified such an act could diminish guilt felt over rejecting role obligations. To leave an ugly wife and a marriage of drudgery for the implied gaiety of bachelorhood could certainly be construed as the act of an irresponsible, immature person. However, to end an unpleasant marriage in order to secure for oneself a marriage of happiness with an

attractive partner, given societal concerns today with finding personal fulfillment, would be more acceptable to an audience which advocates individual freedom, an audience of the "me first" generation.

Rebuilding Social Order by Remarriage

Another interesting aspect of second marriages which differentiated male and female multi-marriers is the element of timing. Most female multi-marriers remarried rapidly in order to be married again, to regain a lost lifestyle. Male multi-marriers appeared to have entered into second marriages in conjunction with an individual choice to alter their present lifestyles. Quite a few of these men married at a time during which they were also changing jobs or moving to new locations.

My second marriage was wham, bam. I met her, moved in with her within two months. I wanted to get out of town, to try someplace new. I decided to move to New Mexico and she wanted to go with me. So we got married. I wanted a new beginning and she wanted to go with me so we tried to do it together.

Jim, 39, divorced six times.

I had moved to Maryland. I thought I would have a chance to start out big there. I had moved hoping for a changed environment and making a whole new life. I was living with her two weeks after I got to Maryland. We had a lot of fun when we were living together so I felt marriage would be part of the change in my life too so we married.

Lynn, 30, divorced twice.

I was changing occupations at the time. I wanted to get away from my father and I thought I would change everything about me. I thought we should start life anew together.

Mike, divorced three times.

Thus we see second marriages for males as somehow different from that which is experienced by females. For men, marriage, due to the attractiveness of the new spouse is seen as an act which will personally enhance them and will justify their previous reneging of social responsibilities. By combining this new marriage with contemplated changes in

work and lifestyles, male multi-marriers are able to achieve a renewed sense of social order in their lives. Female multi-marriers, seeking more than the restoration of simplicity in their lives, are driven to regain a totality of self, the essence of social life. Females remarry in order to obtain bread, the sustenance of their existence. Men remarried in order to treat themselves to the "icing on the cake", so to speak.

Second Marriages, The Emergence of Dissillusionment

Considering the fact that these men entered marriage on a more joyful note than the previous time, it was often a painful experience to watch the icing on the cake slowly melt away.

My marriage at first was terrific, just terrific. I can't say enough about it. . . . After a time we were so busy that we just stopped building feelings for each other. It was a marriage of convenience. God, it was sad to see that beautiful woman turn away from me.

Mike, 36.

I married that good-looking woman. I wanted her to be mine. But the marriage only lasted a month. She had two kids and she was very lax in discipline. The little shits were always running around and getting into everything. I just couldn't handle that.

Bill, 37.

She was so beautiful and so young. But she wanted to stay young forever. I wanted to settle down and create a home but she wanted to still run around and party.

Bob, 37.

I went to New Mexico because I wanted a clean break, a fresh start. The only recreation in that place was the bars and she didn't like the bar scene. So I kept on going by myself and we just drifted apart.

Jim, 39.

At first it was great - everything was perfect. Then I found out she was having an affair. The deception and the trickery, the betrayal I couldn't cope with.

Lynn, 30.

Bitterly these men discovered that the new marriage was not destined to remain the sweet concoction they had envisioned. Somehow these younger, more attractive new wives were scarcely different from the first. These wives, just like their first wives, also had expectations of marriage which clashed with theirs. This created a phase of confusion for these men. They had little understanding of why the dream ended in the harsh reality of another divorce. For some, the ending was preceded by actions performed by their wives which stressed the dicotomy of each different set of expectations. Some men wanted to "settle down and create a home" only to discover their wives were interested in careers or a lively lifestyle of parties. Others expected the marriage to be a continuation of the fun experienced while living together only to discover that being married created a desire in the wife to settle down. Others, after engaging in extra-marital activities during the first marriage, were amazed to find that women also engaged in that type of behavior. Again, as in the first marriages, men were dismayed to find that these new wives were not capable of adjusting to the husband's demands, no matter how varied or lessened from demands imposed on previous wives.

Embryonic Attempts At Change

To a certain degree one is left with a feeling that some of these men did attempt to accomodate their wives in order to stabilize a rocky marriage.

We were married for eight years. During that time I changed away from what she liked. I gave up football coaching and the lifestyle of jock to go back to graduate school. She didn't like where we were living or how we were living. I told her to go find what she wanted to do and where she wanted to live. She did that. I thought she would be back and more satisfied with me after a while but she never came back.

Lynn, 41.

When I came back from summer camp she told me she was unhappy and needed time to herself to discover herself. I agreed that she could go and do that. I thought it would be good for her and she would return refreshed, ready to try all over again. I was wrong. She never returned and instead filed for divorce.
Mike, 36.

What we appear to be seeing in some of these men is an attempt to bridge their individual expectations of marriage and marital behavior in order to reach out to the unhappy wife. If she needs to get away for a while, alright, she can go. On the surface it would seem that perhaps these men have begun to alter conceptualizations of marriage, have begun to exhibit more flexibility. However, under deeper questioning, one still can glimpse a view of the rigid, stereotypical pattern of behavior manifested by these men since early childhood.

"You say the marriage was always terrific but yet your wife left."

The marriage was terrific. Her leaving was something she had to do for her. It wasn't necessarily the marriage.
Mike, 36.

"When you realized she wasn't coming back, did you attempt to talk with her about this?"

Even though we were very close, a great deal of sharing, we never really talked about any problems.

"Why not?"

There was never a real need to. I could pick up from her when something was wrong. If I figured out what was wrong, I changed it. If I couldn't, over time it generally went away on its own.

In short, what we see occurring is the internalization of a new vocabulary which could be used to indicate a less structured role pattern, although in actuality the behavior of these men demonstrates an incongruity between vocabulary and behavior.

Divorce as a Learning Experience

For other men, attempts to restructure the relationships never

occurred and divorce was quickly centered on as the answer to a bad relationship.

As I told you, the marriage only lasted a month. The kids were more than I could handle. I told her that this has just started and it is going to be this way forever and I can't handle it. I want out. I told myself that I have done it once, dammit, I can escape again. So I did.

Bill, 37.

I could see within the first two months that this wasn't going to work out. So I knew I could leave. After you have done it once, it isn't so hard.

Ted, 39.

All the men talked with during this study spoke of the relative ease with which they were able to leave the second marriage as compared to the first. All indicated that the actual process of dissolving a marriage through divorce was easier the second time around, at least in terms of coming to the decision to leave and implementing that decision.

As one man explains it;

It's like going to the dentist to have a molar removed. The first time it is hard, you don't know how much it is going to hurt. The second time you know how hard it will be, but you also know that you will survive the whole thing. Knowing that you will survive makes it easier.

Mike, 36.

Understanding that one does indeed survive a divorce is no indication that one will be oblivious to the social forces which define the position of a twice divorced individual in this society. Whereas in the first divorce these men experienced a certain amount of guilt in terms of running out on role obligations, the second divorce is less guilt producing but far more traumatic in terms of social identity. For the first time some of these men begin to question personal qualities they possess or at least to exploringly consider perhaps they may be deficit in some manner.

After two divorces you have to lose some confidence. I mean you begin to think what in the hell is wrong with me?

Jim, 39.

After losing twice, I thought I had better stay single a while until I figured out what I was doing wrong.

Ted, 39.

What we appear to be seeing for a few males is the tentative emergence of self in marriage. Having been faced with two divorces, these men are beginning to experience the same type of self-doubt so well known to their female counterparts. The initial conceptualization of marriage as representing some aspect of one's social identity is being formed, inasmuch as some anxiety is produced which creates a self image which is, for the first time, being questioned.

The Male Myth of Happy Marriages

However, for the vast majority of male multi-marriers, looking back generally does not occur often and most continue on in new relationships or marriages with very firm definitions of the situation which allows little freedom for introspection, but great flexibility in how they view themselves and their condition.

People who marry a lot are people who are looking and one of these days they are going to find that something they are looking for with that someone they need.

Bob, 37.

No, I don't plan to marry for a third time but I might. If I do it will be something that will just happen and when it happens I will just know it's right. If circumstances were right and it felt right I would do it.

Lynn, 30.

Good heavens, shades of the White Knight syndrome! Do these men really believe that marriages are made in heaven and one day they will stumble on to the perfect marriage? Apparently so. Those men who experienced little personal doubt after the second divorce have a tendency to con-

ceptualize their previous two marriages as simply being something which was not meant to be. Again, as with female multi-marriers, there exists a tendency to explain away two marriages by referring to "wrong choices".

There is no indication that negotiation of marriage is a valid concept for these people and when the marriage ends, it is visualized as something which should never have occurred to begin with. We again see a belief that communication between spouses will not help relieve any tension within the marriage. If the spouse is not happy, there is little the husband can do. After all, her unhappiness is her problem, not his.

As with female multi-marriers, we see two tenuous groups of people emerging from male multi-marriers. The first group considers the dissolution of the second divorce as "one of those things". There is little self-doubt experienced due to the belief that out there somewhere exists the perfect spouse and perfect marriage and, in time, one might be lucky enough to encounter it. A few males begin to doubt the dynamics of their interaction patterns and begin to question their ability to adequately engage in marital relationships. Perhaps, for these men, some change occurs.

Summary

Second Marriages

Second marriages appear to be very similar to first marriages in many ways. There appears to be scarcely any more negotiation of the marriage experience this time as compared with the first time. Spouses still do not talk to each other, either before or after the marriage ceremony. Multi-marriers, after an amazingly short courtship, enter the

new marriage with the same rigidly defined roles. There is no increased flexibility with which to cushion the experience of day to day living. Each proceeds on the assumption that his own construction of what constitutes a marriage is virtually identical to that of his partner.

It generally takes a much shorter amount of time for the recognition of this marriage as being not particularly good to emerge. For females this understanding generates typically two types of responses. Most begin a series of adjustments to their husbands wishes and demands in an attempt to "stay the execution." The maneuvers do not work and women are left with increasing amounts of insecurity. For a few females the second marriage creates an environment which generates new insight into conceptualizations of self and role playing and we begin to see a hint of altered ideology pertaining to marriage and social identity.

Most men enter the second marriage expecting it to be an easy task, perhaps thinking that this time around the whole situation will work out. When the marriage falters, it is considered the luck of the draw and perhaps next time the cards will be dealt more justly. A very few number of men begin to experience an episode of self-doubt which manifests itself in feelings of inadequacy. For the most part though, this marriage is entered into willingly and when it ends, it is conceptualized as being the result of poor choices in mates, although it is generally some favorable attribute of the wife's which initially drew the man into remarriage.

In short, what we are seeing is a reversal of the positions which initially accounted for the first marriages. In first marriages men considered themselves coerced into marriage. They were pushed into the affair by the strength of social pressure. The second marriage can be

viewed as experientially different. Males willingly entered into this marriage so thus it was attractions which pulled them into the situation.

For females, the social situation of being divorced and without a man was so unpleasant, so alienating, that they were in essence pushed into remarriage, for to remain single held no attraction. Having once undergone the grueling social nature of divorce, most of these women were willing to go to further lengths in order to adjust to second husbands, often in a futile attempt to ward off another divorce.

With limited exceptions, which will be discussed more extensively in the next chapter, male and female multi-marriers continue to conceptualize marriage as a state of being. You either are married or you are not. If the relationship remains good you stay married and if it does not, you divorce. No one appears to understand that marriage is a process requiring negotiation throughout its entirety. Marriage still remains a fixed image. The goal is to attain that fixed state, even if the route to eventual marital happiness requires changing partners many times. Given enough times at bat, surely, eventually, one will find the right peg to fit into the right hole. The myth of marriages made in heaven and consummated on earth continues on.

CHAPTER VI

MULTIPLE MARRIAGE: ALIENATION OR CHANGE

Introduction

Many family sociologists, during attempts to investigate the process of divorce, have chosen to conceptualize divorce as a situation which requires progressive stages of adjustment (Herman, 1974; Weiss, 1975; Bohannon, 1971; Krantzler, 1973). Divorce is viewed as a traumatic episode in one's life (Goode, 1956) which requires a concentration of efforts to overcome social-psychological obstacles which necessarily thwart the route to a renewed, normal lifestyle. Implied in this conceptualization of divorce as an adjustment episode is the viewpoint that those individuals who do not successfully follow the various stages toward "health" never finally achieve the goal of an integrated self within a social context. In short, the process of divorce adjustment incorporates a developmental task approach and those individuals who do not eventually reach the goal phase of adjustment consequently go on to experience more remarriage and divorce, in other words, have the tendency to become multi-marriers.

The process of multiple marriage and multi-marriers as individuals have provoked little research but nevertheless have generated sufficient attention to create the use of several tentative labels. Bernard (1956) has referred to those who divorce and remarry several times as divorce prone. Glick (1973) also addresses the problem of the divorce prone

while Bohannon (1971) has attempted a connection between multi-marriers and his concept of divorce chains. With few exceptions, most of the labels utilized to describe multi-marriers connote some type of maladjustment which is termed pathological. People who divorce frequently are seen as somehow neurotic, dysfunctioning, or mentally ill.

Divorce often is, and may mandatorally be, a process of adjustment for individuals, and while those individuals who remarry and divorce numerous times may also manifest neurotic behavior, divorce does not necessarily have to be a situation which emphasizes and further defines pathology. Kraus (1979) has suggested that divorce should be studied for its positive attributes rather than continuing on in the current tradition of conceiving divorce as disaster. A divorce, or several divorces may be viewed as a situation which provides an impetus for symbolic alteration and perceptual change. For the multi-marrier, divorce may be personally enhancing in terms of the incorporation of new interactional skills and may not necessarily indicate an individual who has become stalled at a particular developmental stage. What may occur is not an adjustment to the old pre-marriage social situation of being without the significant "other", but rather the creation of an environment in which the "other" is transformed in terms of meeting identity needs for multi-marriers.

While the final results of divorce can be viewed positively, the groundwork leading up to the decision to divorce can be seen as a crisis time in an individual's life. It is during this time frame that many individuals must come to terms with the understanding that another attempt to secure an intensive relationship has failed. Often these people begin to examine certain attributes they feel they may or may not

possess which are deemed responsible for yet another divorce. For multi-marriers, whose concentration in marital relationships is on its identity bestowing qualities, divorce may represent a true identity crisis. Stryker (1967) has suggested that the study of crisis within a family research context would prove most fruitful. As he states, "Crises will always threaten identifications, for the latter depend on stable activities of others with reference to oneself; and crises are likely to be important in the processes by which identities change" (p. 382). Multi-marriers, through the crisis of divorce, have lost certain characteristics of identity. The "other" is gone and for many there is a tendency to rapidly acquire another "other" with which to reenact marriage. However, for some, the crisis situation which accounts for identity instability through loss of the "other" may also stimulate an introspection which aids in the creation and incorporation of new ways of managing aspects of social identity. The importance of the "other" may be transformed and the symbolic meaning of marriage becomes altered at least in terms of the usage of the "other" as the foundation for identity. Some researchers (Brown, Feldberg, Fox and Kohen, 1976) suggest that divorce aids in the creation of new identity attributes inasmuch as the respondents in their research associated the divorce experience with an increased sense of personal autonomy, a new sense of competence and control, development of better relationships with children and the freedom of time to develop their own interests.

Divorce, then, for multi-marriers, can be an experience which offers options. Some multi-marriers may utilize another divorce as a means for creating social change in their personal lives while, for yet another segment of multiple marriers, divorce is the instrument by which

these individuals are further cast into the interactional behavior which reinforces the chances for another divorce. For the respondents in this study, it is possible to quite clearly see both options being chosen. As previously noted, multi-marriers have a tendency to become established in another marriage or intimate relationship immediately after the first divorce. However, at the conclusion of the second divorce, a trend begins to emerge which divides these individuals into two major groupings. Most multi-marriers, unable to feel secure without the identification of self in marriage, remarry rapidly for the third time. A small group of twice divorced persons, approximately one-fourth of the respondents, have elected to remain single for a period of time. These individuals have been single for at least two years and at the present time do not have any plans for immediate remarriage. Another small group of respondents are presently engaged in third marriages after spending an extensive period of time alone, often not remarrying after the second divorce for over four years. These individuals rate their present marriages as good and for the most part, these marriages have lasted longer than their second marriages did.

In essence, what has occurred is the formation of two major groups: those who remarried rapidly after the second divorce and those who either have not remarried or elected to wait several years before remarrying. A loose interpretation of the trend found among these two groups seems to indicate that those individuals who choose to remain single for extensive periods of time after the second divorce are more likely to enter into third marriages which they rate as relatively happy and stable. Those individuals who rushed into a third marriage after the second divorce are presently divorced from that marriage. For some of

these individuals the process has continued throughout fourth, fifth, and even sixth marriages.

In looking at the data in terms of three or more divorces, time spent being single appears to become a cornerstone in understanding the process of multiple-marriage. Those individuals who are unable to perceive themselves as adequately functioning adults without marriage are the same individuals who continue to rush into marriages and subsequently experience numerous divorces. Individuals who utilize time as an element with which to undergo some type of personal change in terms of identity formation are individuals who have not remarried after the second divorce or waited several years before remarrying a third time.

As we follow the biographical history presented by multi-marriers, it appears that for those individuals who elected to remain single for a set period of time after divorce, time spent alone is conceptualized as an important element in what they perceive to be their own personal change. For those individuals who remarried quickly, time has no significant meaning. In essence, the second divorce is seen by the interactants as a real identity crisis. The ways in which multi-marriers choose to respond to this crisis in terms of valid social identity change or continued traditional identification patterns places these respondents in one of the two major categories.

Time as a mechanism for personal change is an attribute which can be found in its generic form among both male and female multi-marriers. However, despite the fact that multi-marriers of both sexes share in common the change potential found in time, for females this particular element assumes more crucial importance. As with other socially derived perceptions, time is also conceptually defined differentially according

to sex, and as such, is utilized in presenting the biographies of multi-marriers.

The Feminine Response to Divorce Crisis:

Creation of Ambivalence

As we follow the biography of female multi-marriers throughout the course of two marriages and divorces, it becomes apparent that these are women who are caught in the throes of real anomie. They are disillusioned and discouraged. All they had been taught to have faith in, the American dream of wedded bliss, has proved to be erroneous for them. They are experiencing a real crisis in terms of identity. Having been socialized into expecting identity to be derived from marriage, and having completed two unsuccessful attempts to fulfill a sense of self in marriage, the situation for many is perceived to be precarious. Anxiety is intensified as many of these women undergo a loss of faith in themselves and in their culturally derived aspirations.

Female multi-marriers were socialized to become, in a very real sense, the archetype of Riesman's (1950) other-directed person. For them, a sense of self is totally dependent on others for validation and the manifestation of successful integration of identity with marriage, has been denied them. Given their preoccupation with marriage as the measuring stick of self in association with poor past performance, there is little wonder that these are women who approach the concept of marriage with great amounts of ambivalence. They are drawn towards marriage by the nature of their identity needs while coincidentally are repelled their own requirements.

Women who are divorced from the second marriage and are presently single, paradoxically approach marriage with a strong desire to remarry which is governed by a fear of marriage. Caught in a classical approach-avoidance conflict, marriage represents both the epitome of success and failure. Often, while discussing the possibility of future marriages, women expressed their confusion and dismay. Bewilderment is evidenced as women lash out at the betrayal by their own value system. The overwhelming desire to marry is held in check by a fear of being hurt by their own needs.

Before I remarried again I would have a lobotomy to erase memories of how cruel people can be to each other when things take a turn for the worse, to erase how bad I can be.

Johanna, divorced for two years.

I don't understand marriage. It just doesn't seem like it should be that hard to get along with someone. Why can't marriage be like Hart to Hart [television program]? I'm just not sure what it takes to stay married.

Linda, divorced for 18 months.

Today I think that deep down that not all men are ass holes so I do and I don't want to get married again. I am scared of marriage. I don't want to screw up again . . . I just wish I wouldn't trust men anymore.

Michelle, divorced for two years.

A Need for Single Time: Problems and Benefits

During interviews these respondents all indicated a need on their part to remain alone for a while, hoping that a certain period of single-ness would result in gaining new knowledge and understanding with which to take into a third, stable marriage.

One man, presently single for over eight years after his second divorce, describes his reasons for resisting marriage, a rationale utilized by all respondents wishing to remain single for a while.

After two bad marriages I began to think that perhaps there was something wrong with me. I wanted marriage but I couldn't stay married. I decided that I had better stay unmarried until I had come to terms with whatever was making marriage wrong for me. I knew it wasn't fair to inflict my problems on another marriage. First I work out all my problems and then I get married again. You just can't take individual problems into a marriage, marriage has problems you have to work on itself. It is defeating to be dealing with individual problems and together problems at the same time.

Ted, 39, divorced twice.

However, the females divorced from their second marriages, while attempting to follow the path laid out by our male respondent are forced to combat social forces which do not appear to be problematic for males.

Friday (1977) in commenting on the difficulties facing women as they attempt to search for an identity which is competent, complete and ultimately fulfilling, often must overcome a powerful foe which has been created for them by tradition and ingrained by socialization.

We instill in them what psychiatrists call a 'hidden agenda'. We say, Go to college, succeed, be self sufficient, but we also give them this message: If you don't succeed as a wife and mother, you have failed (p. 363).

Female multi-marriers are women who were raised in an atmosphere which only emphasized the feminine, motherly nature of being female. Not having been encouraged to succeed at an occupation, to gain validation from any arena outside the home, to fail at the only avenue open to them for achieving a sense of self is an immense defeat. The inclination to rush back into another marriage is strong and to respond to an alien call to remain single for a while requires courage. Many of these women had not yet completed families and the desire to succeed as a woman, to have children, urges them into remarriage.

I want to stay single until I am convinced I know what I am doing. But I also know that I'm getting old. Time is running out on me. I still have some miles left but I've wasted so much of my life. Soon I will be too old to have children.

Johana, 27, childless after two marriages.

I already have one child but I would like to have another. The longer I stay single the less likely I am to have that child. That bothers me.

Linda, 32, mother of one.

Relating directly to this notion of aging is the impact of a diminishing pool of eligibles. Women sense the scarcity of marriagable men and this increases anxiety to find a new mate.

I know I probably shouldn't have married so soon but have you ever tried to find someone to even date at my age? I hate to use a cliché but a good man, at least a free man, is hard to find.

Linda, 32, divorced from second husband.

The only men still out there are bachelors, and that makes me suspicious. Why isn't he married? What's wrong with him? Or else they are divorced too and then you have all the problems involved with his ex. I know it's stupid considering the fact that I'm divorced twice, but you have to wonder what it is about the divorced man that made him get divorced? It's like, you know something is wrong with you, after all, you ended up divorced. But what's wrong with him too? If you see a man who looks like he's got it all together you have to stand in line just to look at him.

Johana, 27, divorced two times.

Succumbing to the Double Standard of Aging

Men, more than women, are likely to remain single for longer periods of time between the second and third marriages. Males are simply not subject to the same social pressures as females with regard to the critical component of aging in this society. A great deal of the desire to remarry experienced by these presently single females was guided by the notion of age in relationship to child bearing capacity. One woman described her decision to remarry for a third time to be the result of this aging component.

I always wanted one more child. The doctor had given me one more year before I had to have a hysterectomy. So I knew I either had that child now or never. So I got married.

Pam, 30, mother of four children.

This notion of aging for women appears to play a critical part in the decision to remarry for a third time. Most of the females interviewed who were presently engaged in or divorced from third marriages indicated that in some way this concept of time taking its toll influenced decisions to remarry.

"Why did you decide to marry for a third time?"

Mike was so stable, a kind, caring person. I thought he was the kind that would love me til I died, you know, the real stuff. I wasn't getting any younger. I also needed a father for my son.

Sandi, discussing her third husband.

I was thirty-five years old and felt it was time that I found a good, stable home life. I felt the lessons I learned from the first two marriages would combined with the experiences I had had from just living would make a third marriage good. You would think that at my age I would know more than I did when I was younger. I felt like I was getting old quick and I had better get my act together soon.

Fran, divorced from third husband.

As women grow older and are followed through the course of two marriages, the concept of time as it effects phases in one's life becomes an increasingly important variable. Time becomes both an ally and the enemy. For women who are divorced from second marriages, "single time" is often seen as the means by which one comes to some understanding of the forces which aided in the destruction of two marriages. Time spent single is conceptualized as an asset in terms of establishing successful male-female relationships. Time is a respite, an occasion to be spent in self-reflection. Time apart from marriage is a friendly interval to be savored. However, operating jointly is the notion that time is also the enemy. These women become acutely aware of the ravages of time in terms of the ability to have children, the aging process on beauty, and the number of men available in a pool of eligibles. Time is

dual-faceted and few women are able to overcome the concept of time as the enemy in the end.

Those that fall prey to the notion of the ravages of time remarry fairly rapidly, generally well within a year from the second divorce and some within a month or two. Those who remain single for several years indicate that initially they had planned not to remarry for a period of time but slowly they were drawing near to the finality of time as the enemy. In interviewing men, one is left with the impression that time is seen only as an ally. Men do not fear aging with the same sense of timing of life phases that women possess. When men remarry quickly after the second divorce, it is for other reasons rather than a fear of being too old to bear children or find mates.

Third Husbands: A Process of Settling

For female multi-marriers, the dual pressures created by the problematic nature of aging and a diminishing pool of eligibles may result in a mate selection process which is strongly influenced by a sense of resignation. The notion of "single time" as an aid in understanding the circumstances which combined to create two divorces is tempered by the knowledge that the passing time also results in a lessened likelihood of obtaining a good man, one who is untainted by previous divorces or interactional problems of his own. Growing older and feeling a sense of urgency in their search for self-fulfillment in marriage, it may be difficult for these women to uphold ideals which have already been tarnished. Ken Kiser, family sociologist, has suggested that perhaps, given the social pressures facing older women, female multi-marriers are forced to settle on a man who can provide certain tangible securities

rather than actively selecting a mate who may afford them the opportunity of high levels of emotional involvement. The notion of settling on a mate rather than actively choosing a husband indicates a capitulation to a dismal future. When discussing motivations for remarriage, this idea of settling rather than choosing appears to come into play.

Most females who remarry for the third time can be seen as being pushed into marriage for a variety of reasons, the most of which is the idea of time as an enemy. However, other considerations are also evaluated. The ability of the future spouse to properly provide financial security is a strong consideration. While many of the females interviewed alluded to a romantic feeling towards the third mate, all strongly noted the importance of financial security as a primary motivator for remarriage.

Marriage means to me a stable home. Mike was able to provide that. I could stay at home and raise my child.

Sandi, mother of one, discussing her third husband.

I wanted economic equality. He treats me as an equal and I contribute equally. I don't ever want to end up supporting a man again. He would never let that happen to him so I married him.

Connie, remarking on third husband.

I divorced my second husband because he wouldn't work and couldn't make any money. I want to be supported sometime too.

Johana, divorced twice.

While some women did not list financial security as part of the criteria for remarriage, the importance of this factor is evident when women discuss reasons for leaving the third marriage.

He had no initiative. He wouldn't get a really good job and support us. He just wanted to stay on drugs and keep jobs that demanded very little. After three marriages I had more goals than simply staying high on dope.

Linda, 27, divorced from third husband.

I don't want to sound real material but he just moved in here when we married. I guess I resented the fact he brought nothing financial into the marriage.

Fran, 35, explaining her third divorce.

Practicality reigns high again in terms of motivation for third marriages. Women are looking for stability, financial security, a family life and all within a time framework. There is a sense of urgency in the search for these qualities. Time is running out and an adequate husband must be secured soon. Few listed being in love as the rationale for remarriage. Most internalized lessons from second marriages and selected third spouses from men who are different from troublesome second husbands.

This time I wanted someone who was not a drinker. I didn't think at the time that dope would be the same as alcohol.

Linda, discussing third husband.

He wasn't as good-looking as the second but then, maybe he wouldn't chase the skirts as much as the other one.

Fran, discussing her third husband.

One woman, who had stated she married her second husband in order to secure an independent lifestyle, reflects on the decision to marry her third husband:

I wanted someone to share everything with. I had to share everything or I felt left out. When I no longer was doing drugs and he was, I wasn't sharing his life anymore and we fell apart.

Linda, 27.

Another woman, after remaining single for six years after her second divorce, describes with total honesty her reason for marrying her third husband, a man 10 years younger than herself.

When you marry someone that much younger than yourself, you can literally raise them to be the way you want. You don't have to be scared of getting hurt.

Pam, age 30.

Female multi-marriers marry for the third time for the same underlying

reasons which prompted earlier marriages. The desire to establish selfhood in marriage is still dominant, however, the social forces associated with aging and a shrinking pool of eligibles create additional burdens in terms of establishing the quality of marital relationship desired. A third husband does not necessarily need to be particularly attractive or especially wealthy. Having undergone considerable emotional trauma in terms of attempting to adjust to the demands of second husbands, female multi-marriers seek third husbands who will provide them with a sense of security often judged missing with prior husbands. In essence, these women look for men who are not what they have married in the past. They marry men who are not drinkers, not skirt chasers, and who will not demand high levels of adjustment. Often the attraction to third husbands is based not on what these men are like but rather on what they are not like in terms of the type of marital relationships these men seem to offer.

One woman, Fran, explains her third marriage in this way:

I had never had a Christian marriage before. I had other kinds but not this, so I figured why not?

Another, reflecting on the difference between her present marriage and her second states:

Sure, I got married again for security. I admit that. But this time it is different. He treats me as an equal person. I'm not dumb just because I am a female. We have mutual respect and for the first time for me in a marriage, friendship. This one doesn't expect me to wait on him hand and foot.

Connie, 33.

The Effects of Single Time on Third Marriages

Many respondents, in relating the effects of single time, offered descriptions of themselves which reflected a renewed sense of self.

I was petrified at the thought of actually buying a house all on my own. I had never bought before and here I was single with two kids and investing that much money. It was scary but thrilling all at the same time. I was finally doing something on my own.

Fran, discussing her life after her second divorce.

I finished college after that second divorce. I never knew if I had what it took to do it but I just knew I had to try to do something good for me, to make me feel good. I proved I was worth something when I graduated.

Linda, after her second divorce.

For the most part, single time was utilized by these females as a period to become equipped to deal more effectively with the world. Some completed educations, some bought houses, others accepted career advancements. Each secured some element of control in her life.

The effects of this newly established sense of control and autonomy can be ascertained by the types of marital relationships formed in third marriages. One woman, in attempting to describe the results of her single time, states the direct affect it had on her third marriage:

I knew this marriage was going to be different from the first two. I had an education this time and knew I could take care of myself. If it didn't work out, I wouldn't lose everything this time.

Linda, after completing her college degree.

For those women who felt they had utilized their single time advantageously, there does appear to be a direct relationship between their sense of increased autonomy and what they perceive to be a better quality of marital relationship. For those women who were presently engaged in third marriages at the time of interviews and who rated those marriages as good, indicated that they were good because of the egalitarian aspect of the marital relationship. There is no evidence of the intensive adjustment to spouse which took place during the second marriage.

This time I am a partner. This time I am not a doormat. This was my house that he moved into. I didn't move into his. We plan things together, not him making decisions and

me carrying them out. We decide together and we do together-never again him deciding and me doing.

Connie, describing her third marriage.

This marriage is good - better than the others. Tom changes diapers and feeds babies as often as I do. We both work and contribute money to the home. There isn't any more of my spending his money like in the first marriages. Now its our money - we both work for it. Tom does housework just like I do because he lives here too and dirties too. I guess the difference is it is our home, like our money. Being single for six years taught me the importance of having my own money and my own home. I would never go back to ever letting a man give me his money again.

Pam, describing her marriage after single time.

For those women who had entered what they considered successful third marriages, single time was the one deciding factor which they felt had contributed to the establishment of a quality marital relationship. Single time had allowed them to develop a sense of control over their own lives and each took that sense of control and utilized it in creating a marriage relationship far different from the previous ones.

However, the confidence which resulted from single time did not always culminate in a happy third marriage. For a few of these women the birth of a sense of control only contributed to the destruction of the third marriage.

Those women who were divorced from their third marriages cited that in some ways this sense of control was responsible for the dissolution of the third marriage. A lack of willingness to adjust to new husbands created problems. One woman explained her third divorce in this way:

He never understood why I left for work thirty minutes early. He didn't understand that I needed some time to myself before I started the day. He was jealous of any time I wasn't with him. I refused to be held accountable for every minute of my time away from him. When he said he thought it [the marriage] wouldn't work out because of all the jealousy, I agreed and left.

Sandi, age 29.

Martha, 40, felt her marriage failed due to her unwillingness to accommodate her husband. When he was transferred to another state she refused to quit her job and go with him.

When the marriage started going wrong, I just left it. I wouldn't go with him. I had been through all that before and no way was I going to get left high and dry in another state. I loved him but I wouldn't do that again.

For some women it is the ability to control a part of their lives for the first time which makes the third marriage good. For others, it is a situation in which one risks losing the newly established sense of control which forces yet another divorce. These women still seek marriage as a mechanism for establishing their credentials as wholly adequate females, but yet, by the third marriage there is an assessment of the price one has to pay for the successful creation of that particular identity. Some find the price too exorbitant and refuse to pay. Others succeed in establishing a lifestyle with a new spouse which affords them a certain amount of autonomy. By the third marriage there exists a hesitancy to totally absorb oneself into the marital relationship. There is the beginning of a tendency to conceptualize self as perhaps separate from a man. This realization that perhaps one can stand alone, apart from a man, is evidenced in the words spoken by a woman as she describes the destruction of her third marriage.

Asking him to leave is the most courageous thing I have ever done in my life. To tell someone, a man, who loves me to leave me because I am not happy took more courage than anything I have ever done.

Fran, 35 years old.

This woman was amazed by her ability to put herself first, to leave the bonding with a man by choice. She was impressed by her control over her own life. A very heady first experience for her.

The slow emergence of control over one's life is demonstrated in yet other ways also. Most of these women underwent grueling first and second marriages, often being the spouse left behind. By the third marriage it is the female who does the leaving, and often after a very short trial period. Several of these third marriages lasted only a few months. There appears to be little tolerance for lengthy adjustment periods. It is assumed that if the marriage is to work, it will connect immediately. If not, then it is left behind rapidly.

Strategies for Identity Protection

By the third marriage female multi-marriers have attempted to alter the importance of marriage. Having undergone the traumatic experience of identity loss through two previous divorces, they enact strategies which will prevent total destruction. The most frequently employed strategy is that of not investing so much of self. A part of self is held back. Marriage has been defined by multi-marriers as identity bestowing yet also pain rendering. Weigert and Hasting (1976) have suggested that to the extent that moderns foresee the probability of painful and meaningless identity loss, they may seek to avoid its sources. As Vicki, age 35, explains her relationship with her third husband,

I really trust Les. I don't think he will hurt me. I know he would never hit me and I don't think he will ever leave me. But then, I thought that of my other husbands too. I love Les and I know he loves me but this time I'm not counting on it the way I did before. This time I have my own career and if it ends, it won't destroy me. I give to Les as much as I can but I don't expect him to hang the moon for me, I won't let him be that needed. If he is still with me in 20 years I'll let myself believe he hangs the moon.

Female multi-marriers, having been socialized into seeking identity

through marriage, still continue to do so. However, there is now a tendency not to place all of one's eggs in a single basket. The baskets have proven to be fragile in the past.

Another strategy utilized by female multi-marriers during attempts to avoid pain is the alteration of the meaning of marriage, at least as it applies to time intervals. There is now little faith in the longevity of marriage. Doubt is always present, even in those third marriages which are rated by the participants as good.

I don't know if the marriage will last. He's 28 and has never been married before and has never had any children. He says it doesn't matter to him now but I know that by 35 he might say to himself 'I'll never have a child of my own'. You always want to go into a marriage thinking it will last forever but you are a damn fool if you don't leave some options open. It would crush you if you thought it would last forever.

Connie, mother of one.

I guess I really expect him to leave when he is 23 or 24. One day he is going to think about all he missed out on by marrying so young. He says he won't but he will.

Pam, whose present husband was 18 at the time of marriage.

Expectations of marriage have altered. No longer does anyone ask for forever. The emphasis is on now and there is little future orientation in the third marriage as women attempt to approach the relationship more rationally.

My first marriage was an act of desperation. The second marriage, well, that was hope, that was maybe. With this third, I'm comfortable, for now. I learned my lesson with Johnny [2nd husband]. I expected to get gray and rock on the front porch with that man. I thought love would conquer all. Now I know better. Now I don't expect forever. Now I expect only for as long as it lasts.

Pam, age 30.

The end result of the two major strategies employed by women during attempts to reduce threats to a sense of self culminate in a self-filling prophecy. If one were to enter into a marriage not expecting it

to last, then should this not affect the marriage? Perhaps the notion of marriage as being a relationship which does not last works to insure that it ends. By virtue of the creation of the prophecy of eventual divorce, these women are further motivated into not inserting a great deal of investment into the relationship. They have learned not to care deeply for something which is transient.

Each marriage past the second has a tendency to last shorter and shorter periods of time. There appears to be, in failed third marriages, less trying. The participants appear resigned to marriages which don't work. Disillusionment encompasses the concept of marriage.

In my next marriage, I'll probably make the same dumb mistakes. I never learn anything.

Martha, 40 years old.

Some women, like Martha, come to accept a definition of themselves as perpetual losers.

Three Time Losers: Further Alterations of Self

There is a clear difference between females who are still engaged in third marriages and those who are presently divorced from third marriages. Those females who are still married, despite their belief that it won't last, maintain a stronger self-concept. They feel a sense of confidence their sisters lack. They have it made, at least for now. Those females who are divorced experience even greater amounts of anomie and ambivalence after the third divorce than the second. But not for the same reasons. In the second divorce, many of these women rearranged their lives during attempts to adjust to husbands with the end result being divorce anyway. They felt inadequate because their adjustment attempts were unsuccessful.

The third marriage was entered into by females generally with a sense of having somewhat more control over their lives. They refused to undergo a repeat of the extreme amounts of adjustment called for in the second marriage. And so, when these third marriages end, females begin to examine their behavior, and ultimately, the costs of having control. Having control, being more autonomous, is now conceptualized as no longer being an asset. It is seen as the impetus to yet another divorce. These females attempt to begin all over again the establishment of a new social self. The feeling is that having failed at control, perhaps they should now revert back to dependence on a man.

After three marriages I have decided that a lot of my problems is this need for independence. I should get over that. I don't want to spend all my life on a telephone pole [telephone installer]. I don't need to prove anything to anyone. I need to allow myself to be dependent more on a man.

Sandi, after third divorce.

If I got married again I would change some things, change some aspects about myself. I would be more subservient, less independent. I would let the man take the lead this time. I always took the lead before.

Linda, after third divorce.

We never really went to church before but we go now. I've turned back to God. I think God can help me change some things about myself. I think He can make me less dominant, and less castrating.

Fran, after third divorce.

For some of these females, the third divorce brings forth a completed circle. They are now back again to the starting point. There is a renewed need to belong to, to become bonded with a man. There is an attempt to buy back into the traditional role of the female. Perhaps now, this time, it will work. Nothing else has, maybe this. And the search goes on and on. The trying on of different social identities, varying personal philosophies and behavior patterns until hopefully one is found which has the potential of securing a lasting identity.

The Masculine Response to Divorce Crisis

For male multi-marriers, the exit out of the second marriage and entry into the third marriage follows a path similar to that which is traveled by female multi-marriers. As mentioned previously, for a few of the males, the time period following the second divorce is one which is spent in reflection, a period utilized for working through interactional problems. Some deliberately avoid becoming too involved with females, past experience has taught that involvement usually leads to marriage. A few others, after waiting several years, remarry for the third time and describe their marriages as good.

The difference between this marriage and the others, what makes this marriage good, is that we both have the same ideals, the same goals. Before I married women who were too young, only interested in money. This time we are both looking for the same damn thing. We both want a home and there is no hassle about it.

Bob, 37 years old, whose present wife is 8 years older than he.

The above statement is from a man who dated his present wife for over two years prior to marrying her. His first two marriages occurred after extremely short courtships.

For those men who ended up divorced for the third time, generally they entered into that third marriage much like one hops on a moving train. Once on the matrimonial road, it appears to be extremely difficult for male multi-marriers to exist. After leaving the second marriage, there is a tendency to become very rapidly involved with another woman. Most of the respondents who were presently divorced from their third spouses had divorced the second wife, courted and married the third, and finally divorced her all well within an average of three years. For some, courting, marrying and divorcing the third wife occur-

red within three months. One man, presently engaged to be married for the fifth time, describes the process of multiple marriage extremely well.

I got married because I wanted to get hold of something and be like everyone else. I wanted what everyone else had. The problem was, getting married for me was like falling forward. I would never regain my balance. I would run into the next one, continue falling and run into the next one. Sort of like dominoes falling forward. I never had a chance to stop and catch my breath. I always kept right on falling.

Bill, 37 years old, divorced 4 times.

Many of these multi-marriers appear to be caught up in the process of falling forward. They fall and never give themselves time to think about marriage, about its meaning for them or the ways in which they go about engaging in it. For these men, the concept of single time is an alien affair.

There is still a strong tendency to utilize marriage as a response to role obligations. Having grown up in an era of lesser sexual enlightenment, marriage is often seen as the natural result of intercourse. For some of these males, marriage is little more than sexual involvement with a female.

The reason I get married so much is that I'm easy. I get drunk, get a hard on, and get married.

Billy, divorced 5 times.

I guess most of my marriages have been based on sex. I keep telling you that I end up getting divorced because of greener pastures. After I have been married for a while other women start looking real good and I'm like the God damn bull in the pasture, the cows on the other side of the fence look real good.

Jim, divorced 6 times.

The Difference Between Saying and Doing

There exists a dicotomy between the vocabulary utilized by these men to describe the ideal of marriage and what appears to constitute

their actual marriages. The same men who responded above by providing an understanding of the sexual nature of their motivation for repeated marriages are also capable of providing a vocabulary for defining marriage which any marriage therapist would readily cherish.

"What is marriage, what does it mean to you?"

Being good friends, no domination and maintaining your own identity.

Billy, divorced five times.

I want someone to be completely honest with me, to share with me.

Mike, divorced three times.

Marriage is a bond between two people. You have given your life to share.

Jim, 39, divorced six times.

Male multi-marriers appear to marry in order to meet role obligations which operate to insure legitimation of sexual intercourse. Since there is a tendency to rapidly engage in sexual relationships after each divorce, it is not unusual to find that these men have also remarried again at a rather fast pace. To be involved sexually with a woman is to insure that marriage will also occur. However, despite the fact that these men are inadvertently pushed into marriage through role obligations they are not immune to the cultural forces at play in society today which initiate an idealism of marriage. Thus these men have at their disposal a vocabulary to describe marriage which in very few ways actually reflect the marriages they engage in.

Rejection of Single Time: Reinforced

Role Expectations

Few male multi-marriers take advantage of single time and consequently continue to fall into one marriage after another. Like their

female counterparts, male multi-marriers tend to remarry more rapidly with each succeeding divorce. Very little time is spent in courtship and the majority of the courtship is tied up in interactions of a sexual nature. There is no time for discussions of goals and values. As with previous marriages, there is a belief that both participants in the relationship must share the same ideas about marriage since they share the same bed.

This lack of goal clarification between male multi-marriers and their spouses is manifested all too clearly at the time of divorce. Strong conflicts in values, expectations, and ideals pertaining to marriage are indicated as the motivating factor in decisions to divorce.

The following men when discussing their third divorce, give evidence to the notion that little communication occurs between marriage partners prior to marriage.

The lifestyle I thought I wanted and she wanted too didn't work. She just didn't want it. She doesn't fit in. I want to belong to the country club and she wants to fish.

Mike, 36.

We dated for a couple of months before we got married. It wasn't until after we were married that I found out she couldn't keep a job and that she took drugs.

Bill, 37.

We got married and everything changed. She got possessive and wanted me to stay at home with her. I still wanted to go out to bars and ride my motorcycle. She thought getting married meant we wouldn't be on the go all the time.

Billy, 30.

Another factor which may aid in the destruction of these marriages is a residue left over from the second marriage. Even after two marriages there is a continuing tendency on the part of these men to characterize a successful marriage as happenstance or luck. These men still, to a certain degree, buy into the myth of the marriage made in heaven.

If I get married again it will be something that will just happen and when it happens I will just know it's right. If circumstances were right and it felt right, I would do it.
Lynn, 30.

Chance, luck, the right timing, the right circumstances are all viewed by these individuals as elements which go into the formation of a successful marriage. There is a belief that if one marriage does not work out, then perhaps the next one will. Given the fact that there is a certain element of chance inserted into their definition of the requirements for a solid marriage, it is little wonder that these men do not waste time remaining in a marriage which they view as bad. A poor marriage is seen as an erroneous "roll of the dice" and the tendency is to divorce quickly and get back into the game. Perhaps the next "roll of the dice" will produce a winning play.

Given the fact that a good marriage is viewed as luck, there is little reason, in the minds of the respondents, to dwell on past history. Little introspection is experienced by these men. When marriage fails, blame is not internalized. Fault lies with the spouse or poor luck. This tendency to set aside responsibility for failed marriages is illustrated well by one of the respondents.

I won't do anything different in my next marriage. I don't feel I have failed in marriage. On a day to day basis I have done alright. My marriages were simply situational incidents. My marriage, the way I do marriage, is alright.
Mike, 36.

This belief has fortified this particular respondent through three divorces.

The Emergence of a Self-fulfilling Prophecy

For Males

After a series of failed marriages, there is a tendency on the part

of male multi-marriers to begin to doubt their ability to secure a stable marriage. "Burned twice", many are dubious of the success of yet another marriage. Some may feel that perhaps their bad luck will never change and for those few men who took advantage of single time, there is the bitter knowledge of the sheer difficulty involved in process of working out any marital relationship. These men, like their female counterparts, often enter into third marriages fully expecting them to fail.

I had doubts about all my marriages lasting before I married except for the fourth and I really wanted that marriage to last.

Bill, 30, divorced four times.

I guess I have trouble staying married because people get on my nerves. I can't afford to love anyone because something is going to happen so you don't get close to people and you don't get hurt. I never entered any marriage except the first expecting it to last. But I guess it doesn't matter because I still get married . . . It's human nature to want to get married.

Billy, divorced five times.

Working in conjunction with the emergence of this self-fulfilling prophecy of eventual failure in marriage is the tendency on the part of male multi-marriers to marry younger women. The majority of second and third wives are usually around 10 years younger than the respondents. These men appear to purposely seek relationships with younger women.

I like younger women. I can offer a younger woman some things that I can't offer to someone my own age.

Mike, 36.

She was 18 and I was 32. [laughing] Note a bit of difference there, did you? She was 'hot damn' good-looking and the old grass was greener again. I don't think the age difference was a real problem. I could still dance all night at 32 and not to be bragging, but sexually I was still all together. I really don't know why all my wives are so much younger than I am. Maybe it's just the younger ones are so much better looking.

Jim, 39.

Male multi-marriers, tied to male sex stereotypes, tend to conceptualize women as being the property of the husband. Given this notion then, the respondents have a tendency to marry women who, through sheer youth and beauty, have the ability to reflect back to their men enhancing attributes.

However, while these men are actively seeking relationships with younger women who will function positively to increase personal esteem, they are at the same time setting up circumstances which will eventually produce problematic areas.

Sure, she was gorgeous and I felt proud to be with her. Men would look at her and I felt like a king because I was the one with her. But I always knew, even from the beginning that it wasn't going to work. I would mention baseball cards from bubble gum or The Platters and Twilight Time and she wouldn't know what I was talking about. My past she hadn't even been born in. For example, we went to see American Graffiti and she didn't see all the humor in it. Hell, that was my childhood!

Jim, 39.

For other, the differences in age related to more concrete matters which directly effected the marital relationship.

She is concerned that I might get tired of the whole situation and leave, and she is probably right. I knew when I first married her that there would come a day when she would want to have a child. I have no plans for any more children and when that day does arrive, we will split.

Lynn, 41, father of three children from previous marriages.

Men marry younger women in order to enhance their social identities, while intuitively understanding that doing so will aid in the destruction of that marriage. The notion of a self-fulfilling prophecy is reinforced.

A Masculine Difference in Serial Marriages

There is one final element in the masculine road to multiple marriage

which sets this course off as opposed to the road taken by females. As earlier discussed, females perceive time as an enemy for the most part. The years bring a component of aging which they fear and hate. A certain portion of this anxiety over age relates to their ability to successfully bear and raise children. Those who have not completed a family yet feel an urge to hurry and find a mate before it is too late. This sense of urgency is not experienced by male multi-marriers. There is little concern over fatherhood. When these men speak of settling down and building a home, for the most part, children are not considered to be a part of the scenario. Off-spring compose only a very small portion of the male multi-marrier's social world.

When a marriage ends in divorce, any ties which may bind the two spouses together are irrevocably broken. There is no looking back. Any children which may have been produced by the marriage are seen as belonging to the wife. Children are womens' work. With rare exception, children are no longer seen by their fathers and few men even contribute child support. There is little emotional bonding with children.

Yeah, I do have a child. I have a son. He's 10 or 11 now, I guess. No, he may even be 12. I would have to stop and think about that.

Billy, age 30, father of one by his first marriage.

Let me see. I guess my son is 10 now. I haven't seen him since he was a baby. I don't send any money to him, or any child support. I paid her a sum of money at the time of divorce for him. I suppose maybe someday I will look him up when he is an adult and get to know him then.

Ted, 39, father of one child by his first marriage.

I see my youngest daughter some times. I run into her at the cafe sometimes. Of course, she calls me Jim and thinks of me as Jim. I don't know if she knows I'm her father or not.

Jim, 39, father of three daughters.

"Do you want her to know you as her father?"

Oh, I guess not. Doesn't really matter. When her mother and I divorced she [the ex-wife] never hassled me about child support so I figured the girl was really her's to do what she wanted to with.

Jim.

Ties are maintained with children, however nominal, only if a set sum of child support is paid periodically. If men do not pay child support, then the off-spring are seen as belonging to the wife totally. No contact is maintained with ex-wives or children. Just as wives are seen as enhancing property to many of these men, children also are conceptualized as property, and after the divorce the children become the total property of the wife.

Perhaps the last statement seems harsh. This researcher really does not know how to soften it without losing the context of meaning applied by men as they perceive their children. Perhaps given the rugged, authoritarian fathers these men were exposed to as children, it may well be simply a reenactment of their own relationships with their fathers. One also needs to bear in mind that multi-marriers tend to marry others like them, often choosing females who have been divorced at least once. Both males and females who marry frequently have a tendency to insist on complete cessation of all interactions at the time of divorce. It may be that this lack of communication between fathers and sons is a situation created by ex-wives.

Despite what appears to be for some of the female respondents a deep concentration on finding a mate and having children before it is too late, there is an amazingly small number of children. Ten female respondents accounted for only 11 children, with one respondent being the mother of four of these children. The eight male respondents contributed 11 children, with one male being the father of three daughters.

This is an interesting contradiction. Females who advocate children have overall less children than males who appear to be at most only nominally interested in fatherhood. Over all, multiple marriers appear to have less children on the average than those individuals who marry only once. Of course, it does take time to produce children, and for many of these people, marriages simply do not last long enough to produce off-spring.

The Many Times Married

Three of the respondents interviewed were individuals who were presently married or divorced from their fifth marriage. There is one thread that ties the experience of these people together. Each succeeding marriage was undertaken after a short courtship, shorter than the one preceding it, and the marriage lasted less time than the one it followed. For these three individuals, marriage can best be described as a merry-go-round. They are much like children at a circus. They climb on the merry-go-round and never want to get off. They continue going round and round, occasionally changing horses, but never staying with one for very long. These are people who are dismayed at their own history. They are embarrassed and saddened by their inability to sustain a marital relationship. They want a successful marriage but they simply do not know how to go about obtaining it. Some are bitter and most are afraid. They are, in a very real sense, their own worst enemy.

I want to have a lasting marriage but I always end up choosing the wrong woman. I know they are wrong when I choose them but I do it anyway.

"If you realize they are wrong, why do you think you marry anyway?"

If I choose the right one, they would expect you to get close and I can't do that. I can't let anyone get close.

Jim, 39 years old, divorced six times.

I've faced the fact that I will never be able to do it, make a good marriage. I'm one of those people who were never meant to be happy. I guess I will always be alone. I'll try to marry again, I know that, but I'll just screw up again.

Martha, 41, divorced five times.

Summary

Sequential marriers are individuals who, in a very real sense, feel little control over their own destiny. Much of life is conceptualized as luck or chance. They are individuals who have seen the satisfaction others are able to derive from marriage and want very badly to have this for their own. Unfortunately, they have no idea how to go about obtaining it.

A few, after the second divorce, are able to take advantage of single time and analyze past mistakes. These are the individuals who have come to some understanding that perhaps marriage is an active process, an experiment in living which requires the two participating parties to both have input in the relationship. For the rest, those who go on to have three, four, and even five marriages, there is no time for reflection. The past is put behind them as quickly as possible and is never looked at again. They continue falling from one marriage right into another, inwardly hoping that someone special will catch them as they fall and break the cycle of multiple marriages.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This research effort constitutes an exploratory investigation into the process of multiple marriage. The limiting nature of an exploratory study necessitates the absence of grand theorizing, predictive correlates, and definitive postulates. This study meets those requirements. The primary goal of this research effort was to take a relatively unknown social phenomenon, multiple marriage, and create for the reader a more intimate understanding of it. Its intent, in Lofland's (1971) words, was simply to make that which was "known about" just a little bit more "known". This study was designed to come to some understanding of the social world of a special category of persons, the multi-marriers, by presenting their interpretation of their world. This researcher believes this work has achieved its goals.

However, inasmuch as every research effort, no matter how meager its origins, is expected to add to a body of existing knowledge by drawing certain conclusions from its findings, this expectation will also be met to a certain degree. The process of multiple marriage is exceedingly complex. This inherent complexity makes fundamental insight difficult however, as an exploratory study some tenuous observations can be made. The intent and purpose of publication of these observations is for utilization as possible routes for future, more extensive investigations, certainly not as an end in itself, but rather a beginning.

The complexity of multiple marriage is due to its many encompassing elements, some more critical than others, and all interplaying to a certain extent with each other simultaneously. At times, it appears a futile effort to assess the component parts of multiple marriage and hold any one element up for audience viewing and shout victoriously, "I have it! This is multiple marriage!", for at the very moment you have isolated any one critical factor, the process of multiple marriage, being dynamic, has already moved ahead and left remaining in your hands little more than history.

The above statement is not meant to discount the importance of history, for it is history in a very real sense which gives substance to our lives. However, in terms of analyzing multiple marriage, history is simply, and consequently ultimately, an element in time past. It is an experience which can be used for building on the present and the future but cannot be utilized for representing the whole. For this reason, we have presented the biographies of multi-marriers in a historical sense in order to see a progression from one phase into another, the overlapping of one symbolic episode with the next. It was thought that this particular type of presentation would allow for the visual emergence of altered meanings and definitions as they occur within the life course of the multi-marrier.

Within the body of data, whenever one particular point seemed critical, it was analyzed and discussed at that time rather than elaborated on at the conclusion on the work. It seemed more appropriate to understand the impact of a critical element in the process of multiple marriage at the very time of its influence rather than set it aside for later study. The end result of this type of analysis is a rather micro

view of the emerging processes of multiple marriage as one phase ends and another begins. Of course, this was the intent of the study. However, in terms of placing closure on this research effort, it is now time to step back and view this phenomenon more wholistically, to move beyond the relational scope of one phase building on another, and to try to place the entire process into some type of coherent order.

The Search for Social Order

The Meaning of Marriage

Fontana (1977) has noted that

various sociological theories have explored the extent to which man imbeds the meaning of his life in various structures in society, and while they by no means agree on the nature of this structuring, there exists a general consensus that man crowds his life with preestablishing normative meanings which allow him to proceed relatively undisturbed through his existence (p. 16).

Throughout the historical biographies of multiple marriers, there appears to be one constant theme, an imbedded meaning, which guides and directs the actions of these persons as they engaged in the process of serial marriage. This generic theme will be called the search for social order.

Played out numerous times through many marriages, by the creation and dissolution of various relationships, by the isolation of parent from child, through the narcotic effect of drugs and alcohol, expressed through episodes of family violence and frequent identity reorganizations, is the continual quest for some sense of social order around which to organize social life. Multiple marriers, by their own admission, are individuals who have experienced few, if any, substantial periods of social order and are, by deficit, compelled to initiate situations in

which hopes for a sense of social order can be achieved. Several respondents in this study identified themselves and their counter-parts as searchers. They conceptualize themselves as seekers of stability through marriage. Marriage is seen as social order.

The immediate question which arises, of course, is why marriage should be viewed as social order. Why is so much meaning, in terms of the ability to organize and stabilize social life, imbedded in marriage? This, given the instability of childhood exposures to marriage, is an interesting, although problematic question. A partial response to the question lies, theoretically, not in alignment with role-modeling and other theories which concentrate on childhood learning experiences, but rather in opposition to those particular paradigms. Given the fact that most of the respondents were not exposed to what they define as particularly good marriages, and certainly, by history, the parental marriages appeared to these persons to be without longevity or substance, it would seem that these individuals would internalize messages which would indicate to them that marriages are relationships which do not last. To this extent, a surface observation of the numerous marriages of the respondents appear to support notions of role-modeling or what Muller and Pope (1977) have referred to as the intergenerational transmission of divorce. However, closer observation of the meanings attached to various marriages discount this perspective.

Multi-marriers may, in effect, act as if they hold little faith in the longevity of the marriage relationship, by dissolving marital relationships, but when discussing the meaning of marriage with these individuals, it is shown quite clearly that these are persons who adamantly invest marriage with the notion of longevity. Marriage is entered into

with the belief that it will be a lifetime commitment. In short, there is a discrepancy between what multi-marriers profess to believe, and by rights according to childhood marriages should not believe, and the actual results of a strong belief system.

Multi-marriers, by history, should not view marriage as social order. As children, they were not exposed to the act of marriage as social order, yet over and over they express the notion that marriage is very much the foundation of social order for them. One possible explanation for this discrepancy and polarization between childhood socialization and internalized adult belief systems deals directly with the diminishing influence of the family as the primary agent of socialization. Multi-marriers, as children, may have been raised in physical isolation from others due to frequent moves, and consequently have been left with few ties to people or places, but it should be clear that they were not raised in social isolation. The extent to which they have formed the meaning of marriage as a long-term relationship in opposition to what they were exposed to as children, demonstrates the input of others beyond the immediate family.

Blumer (1969) has suggested that the meaning of a thing grows out of the ways in which others act toward the person with regard to the thing. The meaning of marriage, then, as social order, evolved from a type of social interaction and communication with unknown others outside the immediate family. From Reisman's perspective, with regard to marriage, multiple marriers are very much a prototype of the other-directed individual, at least to the extent that they look to the greater society at large for direction in understanding the meaning of marriage as social order. The majority of these individuals were raised within a

religious environment which stressed the biblical interpretation of marriage as a lifetime commitment. Perhaps media also influenced their interpretation of marriage. This is suggested by one woman's mournful lament of the failure of marriage to be like Hart to Hart.

The scope of this study was not designed to measure the extent of the influence of others on the formation of the meaning of marriage, so it is impossible to cite the various variables which may have joined together to aid in defining marriage for these individuals. It is enough at this point to note that multi-marriers were, as children, despite situations which suggest otherwise, very open to the input of others beyond the scope of the immediate family. To this extent, social learning theories which concentrate on a mindless repetition of social acts are erroneous, at least in terms of explaining the process of multiple marriage for the respondents.

The Residue of Childhood Experiences

Since the meanings applied to marriage by the respondents are not necessarily dependent on childhood experiences, then what is left from the childhood biographies of these persons? In observing the life course of multi-marriers, there appears to be one crucial element which still has effect on adult experiences. This is the notion that social interaction is not dependent on negotiation. As children, serial marriers were not in a position to witness the importance of negotiation in the sustaining of social relationships. The young multi-marrier was reared by an authoritative father, a powerful individual who made judgements arbitrarily and fully expected decisions to be enacted immediately without discussion. Through interaction with this very significant

other, multi-marriers rapidly internalized the notion that social relationships are not dependent on negotiation. As children, they observed the effects of the decision making and implementing power of others on their own lives and perhaps began to think that all of social life operated on the same premise.

The idea that social interaction is not dependent on negotiation is seen in the obvious lack of negotiation displayed in the many marriages perpetrated by these individuals. As mentioned in previous chapters, multi-marriers are persons who do not place much stock in the power of talk. Discussions of poor marital relationships are not entered into with spouses. Decisions to enter into and exit from a marriage are expressed through activity, they are not communicated to others through discussion. Social interaction, and therefore, social relationships, are viewed as consisting largely of expressed behavior, with vocalization not being seen as activity. The acting out of a decision is seen to be the foundation of communication. Talk is not viewed as communication. This culminates in the tendency on the part of the respondents to conceptualize social relationships not as joint activity, but rather focuses attention on the drama of the situation of marriage, with the casting of self as a singular actor and the spouse as a passive viewing audience.

To the extent that any childhood messages are learned from family life and internalized, it is the powerlessness of negotiation in social relationships which proves crucial to the adult experience. As children, with few having long term connections with people or places, thus being denied the opportunity to see the necessity of negotiation in sustaining social interaction, these individuals are persons who possess an inter-

actional handicap. They desperately want the strength of stability in marriage yet lack the capacity for achieving it, for they fail to see the significance of communication as a basis for sustained interaction. These are people who are not tied to the notion of symbolic communication through language.

The effects of not being tied to communication as a means to sustain social relationships are seen in resulting divorces. Jourard (1975), in discussing his notion of marriage as a lifetime choice suggests that,

marriage at its best, according to the image that is making the most sense to me, is a relationship within which change is generated by the very way of relating-dialogue, so that growth as well as identity and a sense of rootedness are engendered (p. 199).

Multi-marriers, immersed in an interactional pattern which denies communication, or dialogue, as a result experience very little growth or rootedness. Their sense of social order is rooted not in the marital relationship, so to speak, but rather in their image of what constitutes marriage. In essence, it is a denial of the social nature of marriage and a concentration on the fixed image of marriage. This idea of a fixed image of marriage will be discussed at length later on. For the present, an understanding of the non-social nature of marriage for the respondents is at issue, particularly as it is implied through their determined sense of the non-importance of dialogue.

Due to the lack of negotiation in interaction, multi-marriers can be seen as behaviorally actors and reactors, with symbolic communication through dialogue having little effect on social relationships. A question arises at this point. Why should there be a symbolic communication to these persons that the meaning of marriage is based on a lifetime

commitment while the symbolic nature of communication through dialogue is interrupted? Unfortunately, there is no set answer. Perhaps, due to the impact of family violence which occurred when negotiation with significant others was attempted as children, the lesson of the non-effectiveness of negotiation in social relationships was rather physically internalized while the notion of the symbolic meaning of marriage was not quite so dramatically displayed.

As Journard (1975) suggested, a lack of rootedness is the result of a lack of communication. Multi-marriers are individuals who grew up with few roots. As children, they were not exposed to long-term interactions which were dependent of bargaining skills and often they interacted with significant others who denied negotiation by power positions. In short, their exposure to the social world of relationships simply did not stress the notion of joint constructions of reality. To borrow a term from Goffman (1969), multi-marriers are not good team members. The extent to which the non-negotiable aspect of marriage carries over into social avenues of human life and the exact process by which this interactional barrier emerges cannot be answered by the limited nature of an exploratory study. At this time and point, it is enough to suggest, in accordance with Journard's (1975) perspective, that non-dialogic ways of being married are either exercised in a chronic struggle for power and control or they are harbors to escape those aspects of life that would engender growth.

The Differential Search for Social Order

It has been suggested that for multi-marriers marriage is seen as a search for social order. However, throughout the course of data presen-

tation, the differential experience of males and females with regard to marriage has been emphasized. While it is true that men and women perceive and experience their social worlds differently, it is also true that these two sexes are members of the same species, and as such, some commonality in perception must guide both sexes in the social arena. It has been suggested that the search for social order through marriage, defined differentially by males and females, is the unifying thread for men and women. In essence, it is not the meaning of marriage as social order which is at question due to sex differences, but rather the definitional processes involved whereby each sex comes to experience self in relationship to social order which generates a unique perception for men and women.

In earlier chapters, it has been suggested that the essential difference in men and women with regard to definitions of self in marriage is simplistically the difference between "doing" and "being". The notion of "doing", for males, connotes a turning to achievements in the outer and 'real' world, thus creating a situation in which the males come to place value on himself in terms of objective criteria. The male is "pressured by his own impulses and by society's demands to give up depending predominately on the response of others for feelings of self-esteem" (Bardwick and Douvan, 1971, p. 256). He is guided away from the social nature of interpersonal relationships as a basis for validation. The young man perceives his search for social order to revolve around a strict adherence to role obligations. To succeed in adequately responding to role requirements is seen as effectively securing goals, achieving manhood.

The female multi-marrier, raised within an early environment which sensitized her to the importance of social relationships, to the point that she perceives self only in relational terms with others, grows acutely aware of her dependency on an interactional "other". Without a husband, the all important "other", her sense of social order is disarranged and the need to continually seek an interactional "other" is played out over and over again through remarriage.

Berger and Kellener (1964) have suggested that marriage can be considered in our society as a dramatic act in which two strangers come together and redefine themselves. Marriage, in this sense, for young males can be seen as a definitional process whereby they come to see themselves as accepting responsibility and fulfilling role obligations. Marriage, as a culturally accepted admission of adulthood, is the embodiment of social order and the cultural directive for manhood. One achieves marriage, much as one achieves any other goal in life, and the actual marriage act itself is sufficient validation of self. Male multi-marriers, through the act of marriage, can then define themselves as having achieved social order. An interpersonal relationship with a spouse is not a necessary part of the definition of social order.

However, the female multi-marrier, geared to the social nature of relationships, and being dependent on others for definition of self, spends the majority of her adulthood attempting to secure a completed social identity through a marital relationship which is essentially secure and safe. The notion of marriage as an on-going daily enactment represents to her the process whereby she is assured of an interactional "other", a completed social identity, and thus enables her to define self in relationship to marriage. Marriage, as the assurance of "other", is, for the female, social order.

For both men and women, marriage represents a sense of social order. Each sex attempts to secure for themselves a sense of social order differentially, by defining themselves in relationship to marriage quite uniquely, however, it is still the meaning of marriage as social order which is the underlying factor which guides conduct for both sexes. Marriage, either as exemplification of role obligations or as the necessary counter-part of a whole social identity, is the generic process whereby multi-marriers make sense out of their social world.

Marriage as a Fixed Image

In following the biographies of multiple marriers throughout the course of several marriages, it was noted that most multi-marriers share a common interactional barrier, the inability to participate in negotiation. This deficit in interactional skills created, for many, problematic areas in the marital relationship which ultimately lead to divorce. For a few respondents, the ability to participate in new forms of social interaction, thus enabling new ways of defining self in relationship to marriage, developed as a result of "single time". For these individuals, social change occurred. However, for the majority, the incorporation of new interactional skills was negated and these persons continued to play out marriage dramas which were destined for failure.

Given the fact that the search for social order through marriage is an imperative in the lives of multiple marriers, why is this particular quest so problematic for them? It is true that there are individuals who, for a variety of reasons, lack the interpersonal skills necessary for sustaining long-term interaction, however, the inability to secure a stable marriage is strongly influenced by one insurmountable obstacle

which prevents multi-marriers from gaining the skills necessary for performing a successful marriage. Multi-marriers have a tendency to perceive all elements in their social world which relate directly to marriage as absolutes. A marriage which is evaluated as good is maintained and a marriage which is judged as bad is dissolved. As in social relationships, there is no negotiation of the basic format which composes their notions of marriage.

For the multi-marrier, the notion of marriage is surrounded by what appears to be a perpetual belief in an ideal-type. The fixed image nature of marriage is very much like the fixed image some attach to a strong religious ideology, that being the belief in an ever-lasting happiness with God. For the multi-marrier, marriage, in effect, transposes the position of God and marriage then indicates a state of perpetual happiness. Just as some persons in this society turn to God to organize and direct their social existence, so do multi-marriers place the same expectations for social order as being derived from marriage. And, just as God is perfect, so too must be the evaluation placed on any one marriage.

So strong is this belief in marriage as an ideal-type, that marriage, any marriage, is compared to its fixed image nature, and any relationship which fails to meet the total requirements set out by this ideal-type, is judged inadequate. Marriage, or rather the concept of marriage as an ideal-type, is seen as an absolute. Individual marriages are compared and if found lacking in any of the component parts of the fixed image, are dissolved by divorce. This notion of an ideal-type for marriage is characterized by the refusal on the part of the respondents to label marriage, in and of itself, as evil or the instigator in any

one divorce. Time and again, blame for the dissolution of marriage is placed on the inability of the multi-marrier to adequately choose an appropriate partner.

Coexisting with, and consequently reinforcing the fixed image of marriage, is what Jourard (1977, p. 199) has referred to as "the myth of the right partner". The myth of the right partner is expressed by multi-marriers in their descriptions of the perfect spouse as being "Mr. Right". When marriages dissolve, the ideal-type nature of marriage is maintained by assessing the degeneration to have stemmed from faulty mate selection processes. The integrity of marriage is sustained by conceptualizing divorce to be the result of not having secured the right partner.

A mystical quality, stemming from the belief in an ideal-type marriage, is inserted into the decision making process of mate selection. Luck, or chance, or fate is seen as the major ingredient necessary for appropriate spouse selection. Thus, just as an ideal marriage is viewed as the ultimate goal in male-female relationships, so too is a selection process which appropriately chooses the perfect mate for the perfect marriage. Negotiation of the marital relationship is then effectively denied as a necessary part of marriage, for if the right partner had been chosen, then negotiation would not be necessary. Should any type of negotiation be called for, or demanded by the spouse, the circular nature of the image of marriage comes into play and divorce is the response. Obviously, if the partner chosen for marriage is wrong, then that particular marriage is not an ideal-type marriage and must be dissolved.

The Creation of the Fixed Image of Marriage

At this point, one is drawn to examine the intensity of this notion of ideal-types. Why is it that multi-marriers are individuals who are guided by such a strong belief system which incorporates the notion of the ideal-type marriage played out with the perfect partner, to the extent that compromise is denied and any relationship which is in need of negotiation is discounted and discarded? Again, as with other questions brought to light by this study, no definitive answer emerges but rather, a suggestive route is taken.

In a very real sense, multiple marriers are individuals who are trapped between two worlds, the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, with the end result of this ambiguous incarceration being the production of marginal men and women. Having been raised in an environment which stressed more traditional lifestyles, at least in terms of adherence to sex roles, there are persons who have been forced to spend the majority of their lives in a social world for which they are poorly equipped, a world of rapidly changing values, morals, meanings, and definitions.

Multi-marriers generally come from lower class families, families which have been noted for their more traditional lifestyles, and perhaps the foundation for the early beginnings of the process of multiple marriage lies within that class reference. However, for the majority of the respondents, while having origins in an environment of poverty, by adulthood have somehow managed to elevate their social class standing by their own sheer efforts. It may be at this point that the intertwining of two social class ideologies becomes confusing and aids in the creation of a lifestyle of serial marriage.

Lederer and Jackson (1968) state:

The institution of marriage has failed to adapt itself sufficiently to current requirements. The constant battle of the sexes and the family turmoil raging today are evidence of the haphazard with current realities. With little help from any social quarter, men and women are fighting a lonely battle to find their place in the sun. Plagued by guilt and uncertainty, they struggle to discover their 'identity' yet are unable to accept themselves if they do catch a glimpse of their genuine needs, desires, and goals. For what they glimpse is not what they have been conditioned to believe is 'good' or 'right' according to age-old systems of belief, developed on the basis of requirements which died at the time of the Industrial Revolution (p. 35).

As Udry (1966) has pointed out, most Americans do not really know what happens after marriage although we certainly have expectations based on various romantic dreams. In terms of marriage, we have a tendency to focus on a fantasy image of marriage which implies that the marital arrangement is an assurance of continual security in a very insecure world. Of course, multi-marriers are more strongly tied to fantasy images than most. For them, coming from a socialization process which tends to instill the notion of role adherence more stringently than other environments, it is possible to understand why these are also individuals who would be closely tied to an ideal component of cultural messages. Roles, in terms of conceptualizations of maleness and femaleness, structure their social world and blend together in a tendency to sustain a notion of an ideal-type. Lederer and Jackson (1968) have further advised that "if modern marriage is to be successful, not only the assignment of roles, but other traditional attitudes and practices as well must be revised" (p. 18). For the multi-marrier, less rigidity in the conceptualization of the fixed image nature of marriage and the myth of the perfect partner is called for.

The Problematic Nature of Multiple
Marriage for Society

Individuals who participate in serial marriage have at various times been labeled with such psychological terms as neurotic or psychotic. Multiple marriers are not necessarily individuals with psychological deficits. The deficiency, is one chooses to label incomplete interactional skills as a deficiency, falls squarely within the realm of the social world, not the psychological. From a sociological perspective, there is no real pathology in serial marriage.

The problem for society, in dealing with this category of person, is the extent to which they focus on marriage as the ultimate validating experience. Other members of our society choose to apply ideal-type constructions to different forms of social organization without a similar dedication being quite so problematic. The religious leader is allowed to profess a faith in a perfect God, the educator is encouraged to argue for an adequate educational system and the politician is given leniency in lobbying for a particular bill without suffering a similar social disorganization as that which plagues multi-marriers.

The tendency on the part of some to label the process of multiple marriage as strange or pathological stems from two sources. Social life is predicated on the notion of interaction. Implied in the definition of interaction is a certain amount of negotiation. The sustaining of a particular reality is dependent of the joint activities of the individuals involved in the construction of that particular reality. Multi-marriers are, as pointed out earlier, not very skilled at joint activities, at least as this concept applies to marriage realities. And, yet, despite an obvious lack of skill, multi-marriers are individuals who insist on continuing to try.

Our society is very oriented towards team activities. A large part of our recreational time is spent in observing or taking part in team activities. Multi-marriers are persons who have shown themselves to be poor team players. They simply strike out alot and rather than try their skill at another game where they might prove more proficient, they demand repeated times at bat. In a sense, multi-marriers are problematic for society for this very reason. They are an embarrassment. We, as a society, do value marriage, however, we do not value those who attempt marriage frequently yet continue to fail. Multi-marriers are losers and all losers are problematic for a society which heralds winners.

The Future of Multiple Marriage

Normative Support of Serial Marriages

In a society which is experiencing high divorce rates, and concurrently a high incidence of multiple marriage, one of the major questions that is raised is whether serial monogamy can be considered representative of an emerging marital form. From a statistical perspective, we are aware that the rise in the incidence of multiple marriage in the past three decades is astonishingly high, however, it has not exceeded the heights to be expected given the rise in divorce in general. An analysis of the future of serial marriage must then fall within the realm of supposition and extrapolation rather than be firmly rooted in demographic findings. In essence, what is called for is an assessment of the various social and emotional forces at play which join together to aid in the creation of new family forms, which of course, are only belatedly measured by demographic instruments after these new alternatives have emerged and become a part of on-going society.

In terms of predicting the growth of multiple marriage as a viable marital form, it is initially necessary to test the waters, so to speak, by ascertaining whether or not any spokespersons have emerged to provide a rationale and justification for engaging in such a behavior pattern. Often it is the existence of such forerunners who, in their advocacy of a particular lifestyle, set the stage for a change in cultural norms which prohibit such behavior. Advocates of new and freer forms of marriage relationships have a long, if somewhat inglorious, history.

The movement to accept divorce as a response to growing marital hostility began in the late 1800s, when controversy was touched off by a growth in the divorce rate. In 1880, there was one divorce for every 21 marriages; in 1900, there was one divorce for every 12 marriages; in 1909, the ratio had increased to one in 10, and by 1916, it stood at one in nine (O'Neill, 1978, p. 141). Naturally this dramatic increase in the divorce rate stimulated public alarm and created two opposing factions, equally divided on the issue of morality in divorce. Early feminists, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, led a political fight to reform the severity of divorce laws and was supported in 1904 by historian and sociologist, George E. Howard. He argued for the decline in the old patriarchal family and a "new kind of marriage marked by higher spiritual standards and greater freedom" (O'Neill, 1978, p. 146). These early pro-divorce activists encouraged an environment which equated divorce with human freedom.

Since that time of emerging conflict, many social philosophers and writers have argued for new family forms centering primarily around the concept of trial marriage. In 1927, Judge Ben B. Lindsey proposed trial marriage in his term, "Companionate Marriage" and was supported by

Bertrand Russell who extended the opinion that it was ridiculous for a couple to marry for the purpose of raising a family when they had not first had sexual experience (1975). Margaret Mead revived this notion of trial marriage in 1966 by her proposal of a two-step marriage, and was followed by Virginia Satir in 1967 when she proposed a five-year renewal contract for marriage and was noted to have suggested that to expect people to be infallible in the selection of a life partner is to ask them to be wiser than possible. Toffler (1972, p. 251) has observed that "a conventional marriage proves itself less and less capable of deliving on its promise of life long happiness . . . we can anticipate public acceptance of temporary marriages. Defining marriage as an out-dated institution, psychologist James Hemming predicts that the word marriage itself may become obsolete (replaced by the designation pair-bound) and that individuals will marry only after having lived together for a set amount of time (Schwartz, 1967, p. 213).

In short, many advocates historically have been active in creating a social milieu which supports an ideology that places blame on an out-dated institution and in effect, allows individuals a justification for seeking new forms of marriage relationships. Given the current divorce rates presently being experienced in the United States, it is more than conceivable that the present cohort of school age children will mature into a generation of adults who accept divorce as a way of life. As Glick and Norton (1977) explain this tendency to more openly accept divorce;

An increasingly common life course event for children today is living in a family where only one parent is present. It has been estimated that nearly one-half of all children born today will spend a meaningful portion of their lives as children in a single-parent situation before they reach the age of 18 years (Population Bulletin, 1977, p. 23, #84).

While it is true that divorce still fosters some episodes of stigma in society today, it is well within the realm of possibility, given the environment in which our young are presently being reared, and in association with spokespersons who advocate new family forms, that serial marriage has the potential of becoming an accepted lifestyle. In short, there is evidence to indicate a tentative but growing normative culture which supports the ideology of multiple marriages. As Yankelovich (1981) has pointed out, when an NBC Associated Press poll in 1978 asked Americans whether they thought "most couples getting married today expect to remain married for the rest of their lives", a 60 percent majority said no.

Variables Affecting Multiple Major Marriage

The study of divorce has reached such a level of sophistication that we are able to postulate certain variables as having direct influence on the likelihood of a given set of persons to divorce. These same variables which increase or decrease chances to divorce, concurrently also affect the likelihood of individuals to engage in multiple marriages. Examining these attributes may shed light on the possible future of multiple marriage in this society.

The Effects of Age on Serial Marriage

The first characteristic to be examined is the factor of age as it influences divorce. It has been well documented by many social researchers that the likelihood of divorce increases as the ages of the spouses decrease. In the past century, the United States has experienced a decrease in the median age at first marriage for both sexes. In 1890,

the median age at first marriage for males was 26.1 and 22 years for females. Today, the median age is 24.2 and 21.8, respectively for both sexes. It is generally assumed that a postponment in the age of marriage is associated with advanced education and establishment of a career, both factors strongly influencing the economic status of a couple, a point which will be discussed later.

While the median age at first marriage has risen from a low of 22.5 and 20.1 in 1956, it still has not matched the rates noted in 1890. Due to the epidemic incidence of teenage pregnancy and increasing tendency on the part of parents to support college children, there may be a chance to see the median age stabilize or drop slightly, if all factors remain equal. However, given the present economic situation this nation is experiencing in association with the drying up of college funding, more young people may be forced into an early labor market entry rather than forego jobs for advanced education. Should this prove to be the case, then marriage at an early median age is more likely as young people become established in the job market sooner.

In terms of applying this factor to multiple marriage, it is evident from the sample of respondents utilized in this research, that potential multiple marriers begin a career of marriage earlier than the median age experienced nationwide. The respondents demonstrated mean ages at first marriage of 20 years and 18 years, respectively. Inasmuch as the likelihood of remarriage, particularly for women, is greatly increased if a first divorce occurs before the age of thirty, then it is logical to expect that those individuals who participate in marriage at earlier ages are more likely to have greater opportunities at remarriage after the initial divorce.

In short, multiple marriers show a tendency to marry earlier and divorce at younger ages than those who marry and divorce only once. Should the median age for young people at first marriage drop, then there is an increased likelihood that we will observe greater rates of multiple marriage. In essence, the present political atmosphere which is advocating less educational funding and financial support in other ways may inadvertently create an environment which allows more youthful marriage to occur, and concurrently, increases the likelihood of multiple marriage. This notion of divorce being related to educational levels is best expressed in terms of college graduates having the most stable marriages, 85 percent of which are still engaged in first marriages. Should we experience a decrease in the number of college graduates in this society, we may experience an increase in the number of divorces.

Socioeconomic Status and Serial Marriage

Another economic factor to be considered when predicting the rise of serial marriage in this society is the relationship between socioeconomic status and divorce. Divorce rates have generally been lower among individuals in the upper socioeconomic groups. Drawing from economic characteristics of the respondent sample, multiple marriage, is seen to be associated with lower socioeconomic status. To put it bluntly, the less the money, the more the divorce. Glick (1975) has suggested that these two factors are related to what he refers to as the "coping power" found among the more financially advantaged. He suggests that the development of superior coping powers may result in those who are more achievement-oriented, have more success in terms of careers and

more expertise in meeting a wider variety of problems associated with advancing careers, as opposed to wage related jobs. Also implied, but not stated, in this notion of greater coping skills is the ability to financially provide greater outlets in terms of recreation and counseling for a faltering marriage as needed.

Komarovsky (1962), Rubin (1976), Farber (1964), and many others have studied the relationship between marriage satisfaction and levels of income at depth. All point to higher levels of income as having strong influence in decisions to divorce or not divorce. As Rubin (1976) suggests, it is the lack of money to pursue alternative satisfaction in life which make the disappointments in marriage so acute. When all hopes and dreams are centered on one tenuous relationship, the marriage, and validation of one's life experiences is lacking in all other areas, it may well be at that point in time that marriage becomes, as Toffler (1970) has observed, less and less capable of deliving on its promise. In terms of simple exchange theory, when a marriage is surrounded by poverty, the rewards outside the marriage may frequently surpass a lifetime of bills.

The pressures which are placed on marriage in a situation defined by too little money are enormous. Generally, lacking in education, therefore being denied access to work which is considered meaningful and fulfilling, lower income spouses spend "at least one-half of the waking hours each day doing work that is dull, routine, deadening-in a word, alienating, and alienated labor" (Rubin, 1976, p. 160). It is expected that substitute gratification may be found in the private sector of life, the family, marriage, and the home. However, a home life which consists primarily of struggles to feed and clothe and house family

members has little potential to respond as an alternative gratification for meaningless work. And for lower class men, directed from early childhood to find validation outside the home, a harsh economic situation can almost guarantee marital dissatisfaction. Marriage, as it is practiced today, does not have the capacity to mediate all of life's problems encountered outside the family.

The current economic situation defined by higher rates of unemployment and rising inflation may well contribute to an increase in divorce, and consequently multiple marriage, in yet another way. By forcing more and more women into the labor force in an effort to stabilize a family's income, the precarious economic system is creating a means for women to secure a validation of self which is not dependent on the role of mother and wife. By earning money and helping in the economic support of her family, women have inadvertently created an alteration in terms of the traditional power arrangement of the American family. By acknowledging an increase in her resources, the working wife may demand more input in the daily functioning of family life, and if this demand is not met by her spouse, she will have the financial capacity to leave the family home and create a home for herself and her children which is not dependent on marriage. As Nye (1979) has pointed out,

Among professional and executive women, the proportion of divorces in which the wife files for divorce is greater among those who earn more than their husbands than among those who earn less than their husbands (p. 27).

The ideology of the women's movement strongly stresses a validation of self for women which is not totally dependent on the role of wife and mother. As more and more women are pushed outside the home into the labor market, there is increasing normative support for her to seek gratifications from work as well as family life. Becoming more self-

supportive, the importance of maintaining the stability of any given marriage may well decrease as employment provides females with greater options, in terms of self-validation as well as financial rewards.

This tendency to begin seeking validation of self from areas outside the institution of marriage was demonstrated by our female respondents utilizing 'single time'. Most of these respondents had traditionally viewed the marriage and husband as the primary source of validation until, after several marriages, began to alter conceptualizations of self and develop a sense of self which was less dependent on a spouse for fulfillment. Should the present economic situation continue on at its present rate of decreasing spending power, it may well force more women to enter the labor market, to find validation of self through work and create a rising consciousness in terms of power arrangement within the marital arrangement. Should this prove the case, then there is an increased likelihood that divorce rates will rise as women perceive increased alternatives to remaining in unhappy marriages.

The Likelihood of Increased Serial Marriage

Any variables which affect a rise in divorce rates for one time married spouses will necessarily cause a spillover into rates of multiple marriage. The divorce experience is indeed a learning experience and once an individual has learned the ropes, so to speak, divorce is an easier task to take on the second and third times than the initial time. One has learned how to maneuver through the legal, emotional, and social obstacles more quickly and divorce becomes less a cost and, for some persons, more of a reward. Given the growing normative support for divorce, in terms of alternative family forms, lowering of expectations

regarding one time marriage as a lifetime choice, and an ideology which stresses validation of self outside the home, divorce rates may well rise. An association between these factors and an unstable economy, a situation which may force a decline in advanced education and earlier entry into the labor force for both men and women, may well prove to be the starting point for a renewed surge in divorce.

However, in attempting to present a framework with which to analyze the future of multiple marriage in society, the various related variables, socio-economic status, educational levels, median age of first marriage, role of the female in society, expectations surrounding the role of marriage in society, an unstable economy, all join together to form what appears to be a rather formidable cultural directive to society for increased divorce rates. However, the intent of this analysis was not to show to what extent the American family is dependent on society at large for its form and meaning, for the notion of family is dynamic as well as static.

The concept of family implies a process, a posturing which is dependent on a certain give and take, an influencing as well as being influenced. The family, and marriage as a social relationship, is transformed into a social unit which, in a sense, engages in a communication with society, while coexisting as part of that society. The family, in effect, becomes part of a larger societal interaction, a socially shared object, whose nature is dependent on the definitions utilized for describing it and the meanings which emerge out of the various ways people act towards it. In this sense, there is no set idea for what constitutes family or what constitutes the various conditions under which multiple marriage will increase. While viewing the family

as a social object may immediately connote a certain expectation for a common pattern of human activity, the whole notion of family is dependent on the individuals who constitute that social object and the society which recognizes it as such.

Marriage, as it is experienced today, can be seen as both an active and passive agent in society. It is a social object with readily observable boundaries but whose nature is fluid, changable, and therefore not given to easy, dogmatic classification or prediction. The family, like the individuals who comprise it, are inseparable from society and are mutually influenced by one another.

Perhaps the most basic element in the image is the idea that the individual and society are inseparable units. While it may be possible to separate the two units analytically, the underlying assumption is that a complete understanding of either demands a complete understanding of the other. Coupled with this assumption is the belief that the inseparability of the individual and society is defined in terms of a mutually interdependent relationship, not a one-sided, deterministic one. (Meltzer, Petra and Reynolds, 1975, p. 2).

In essence, while certain variables at work in society today may dictate a future marriage pattern which focuses on increased divorce and multiple marriage, the result may not necessarily be as predicted. Those individuals who comprise the social unit of a family may emerge from an interaction with society with a meaning for marriage and family life in America which will deny the directives being issued from society at large. In short, multiple marriage should not be regarded as a mere "automatic application of established meanings, but as a formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action" (Blumer, 1969, p. 5).

Future Areas of Research in Multiple Marriage

In the preceding paragraphs, this researcher has attempted to

present multiple marriage as a process. Throughout the course of this research, this researcher has attempted to show how multiple marriage is defined by those who participate in it. In essence, the initial beginnings for any concentration on multiple marriage must necessarily conceptualize marriage as an activity, the meaning of which becomes altered through the process of interaction with others. By observation of those who engage in this process, it will be possible to see how the meaning of multiple marriage evolves, is modified through interaction, interpreted differentially and is expressed in behavior. This research has been a starting point for that study. More involved study, in terms of replication and validation, is now called for.

Certain sub-areas in the study of multiple marriage emerged as being potentially important in understanding the meaning of multiple marriage throughout the course of this research effort. Conceptualizations of self and social identity proved to be most problematic for the participants in this research. One area of fruitful study may well be the notion of self as expressed through marriage in a changing society.

Another interesting area may also be those aspects of interpersonal life best studied through a dramaturgical perspective. Multiple marriers, for a variety of reasons, are not good team players. They appear to have great difficulty in sustaining a joint activity. The extent to which multiple marriers can maintain team memberships in other aspects of social life might prove to be invaluable in coming to grips with their poor showing in the marriage arena.

The notion of "single time" is invested with conceptualizations of self, however, arising from a renewed sense of self appears to be an alteration in the dependency on a mate for validation of self. From

this perspective, exchange theory may prove useful in coming to grips with the ways in which multiple marriers perceive marriage as a valid choice among other options. For these individuals, divorce may be the result of a process revolving around costs and rewards of marriage.

In the opinion of the researcher, multiple marriage lends itself well to future research utilizing several theoretical perspectives and varying methodological approaches. This initial attempt is seen as a starting point, a beginning. It is hoped that the approach utilized for data gathering and presentation aids in understanding of multiple marriage as a process. It is not a definitive answer to all the questions surrounding multiple marriage, but rather a way of making that which was only "known about" somehow just a bit more "known".

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